PARISH LIFE IN MEDIÆVAL ENGLAND

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PARISH LIFE IN MEDIÆVAL ENGLAND

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PARISH LIFE IN MEDIÆVAL ENGLAND

BY

ABBOT GASQUET, D.D.

AUTHOR OF

"ENGLISH MONASTIC LIFE"

WITHDRAWN

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1906

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PARISH LIFE IN MEDIÆVAL ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

THE PARISH

ANY account of parish life in mediæval England must include much more than might at first sight be supposed. To imagine that the story of the parson and his church could adequately represent the story of the parish, even with all that the one had to do for his people and all that in the other was contained and done, is somewhat like thinking that the biographies of kings and nobles and the chronicle of their battles and achievements would tell properly the story of a people or a country. The fact is, that in those far-off days the parish church was the centre of popular life all the country over, and that the priest and other parochial officials were the recognised managers of many interests beyond those of a strictly ecclesiastical nature. Religion and religious observances then formed an integral part of the English people's very existence in a way somewhat difficult for us to grasp in these days, when the undoubted tendency is to set God and the things of God outside the pale of ordinary worldly affairs, and to keep them

out as far as possible. It is unnecessary here, of course, to determine which method is right and which is wrong; but it is useful, to say the least, that the fact of this change of attitude should be borne in mind in any examination into the parish life of mediæval England. To fail to appreciate the intimate connection between the Church and the people throughout that period of our national life will cause the observer to misread many of the facts, upon which a correct judgment of that time must depend. A writer in the *National Review* does not overstate the truth when he says—

"In the Middle Ages the conscious sharing in a world-wide tradition bound the local to the universal life, and through art and ritual the minds of the poor were familiarised with facts of the Christian faith. By our own poor I fear these facts are very dimly realised to-day."

THE PARISH

At the outset it will be well to determine the exact meaning of the word "parish," and to establish as far as is possible the origin of the English parochial system. As an institution, although occupying so important a position from the early Middle Ages, the division of the country into parishes does not appear to have come down from great antiquity. The word "parish"—the English equivalent for the Latin *parocia*—is derived from the Christian use of the Greek word παροικία in the sense of a district or diocese under the rule and jurisdiction of a bishop. In a recent paper on "The Rise of the Parochial System," printed in the *Transactions of the Exeter Architectural and Archæological Society*, the author, the Rev. Oswald Reichel, has treated this

question fully and in a most satisfactory manner. What has been so well done need not be done over again. I consequently make no apology for here following very closely his line of argument and presenting his conclusions.

In Rome, Carthage, and other large cities, "for the sake of the people," as Pope Innocent I. says in a letter written in A.D. 416, there were district clergy appointed to preside at the services on the Sundays. Even then, however, in order that they might not consider themselves "separated from his communion," he sent to them by his acolytes what he calls the "fermentum," made by himself, which has been variously interpreted to mean the Holy Eucharist consecrated by him as bishop, or bread he had blessed, as a symbol of the communion of all the district churches with the central one; but which is almost certainly the former.

These district clergy, however, were not parish priests as we understand them. For (1) they belonged to the church of the bishop, though from time to time detailed for duty in the various churches, which existed according to need in each region or division of the city. Over each of these regions a deacon presided as the bishop's delegate. (2) The direct government of the church and the cure of souls belonged to the bishop in all places within his jurisdiction, and services were performed by him, assisted by the city clergy, on fixed days in various churches in rotation. (3) Although it is possible to trace separate revenues for separate churches as early as the end of the fifth century, the offerings of the churches of a district were not kept apart, but were administered by the deacon of the region to which they all belonged as contributions to a common fund.

It is obvious, therefore, that the district clergy, thus described, cannot be claimed as the origin of our parochial system. The English parish priest was established to meet the needs of the country rather than of the city; and, beginning in the first instance to act as chaplains of landowners, who required the services of religion for themselves or their tenants, they gradually acquired the position of ecclesiastical freeholders. Appointed by the patron, they received their office and their spiritual faculties from the bishop of the see; and, whilst subordinated to him according to law, were yet irremoveable except by the strict process of canonical law and for serious offences.

Whatever may have been the early dependence of the priest on the patron, by the fourth Council of Orleans, A.D. 541 the bishop was directed to control and protect these clergy and in A.D. 813 the Council of Mainz forbade laymen to deprive presbyters of churches which they served or to appoint them without episcopal sanction. It was not, however, till the twelfth century, according to Mr. Reichel, that the country parson had acquired full recognition as the permanent and official ruler of a portion of the Lord's vineyard presided over by the bishop of the diocese.

The sphere of work of the local clergy was the parish, which was by no means the same as the town, hamlet, or manor. According to an authority, in the thirteenth century the distinction was fully recognised. "For in one town there may be several parishes," he says, "and in one parish several manors, and several hamlets may belong to one manor." The parochial system, then, in the Middle Ages, had come to occupy three separate *functions*. It had acquired, in the

first place, the notion of a well-defined group of families organised for the purposes of social order and the relief of needy brethren. Secondly, the word "parish," applied to the same group, was regarded as a sub-unit of ecclesiastical administration; directly under the parish priest, indirectly under the bishop. Thirdly, it was the name of the foundation property or estate.

From the earliest times in the Christian Church the duty of all to assist according to their means in the support of their poorer brethren was fully recognised. The peculiar method, however, of enforcing this duty by the regular payment of tithes was apparently insisted on in the West by the second Council of Macon in A.D. 585, and in the Council of Rouen in A.D. 650. In England, to speak only of it, by the middle of the tenth century the religious duty of paying tithe was enforceable at law, and this tax was commonly called "God's portion," "God's consecrated property," "the Lord's Bread," "the patrimony of Christ," "the tribute of needy souls." This was undoubtedly the view taken in pre-Reformation days of the duty of all to pay the tenth portion of their goods for the use of the Church. What that use was has frequently been entirely misrepresented and misunderstood. In the words of the author of the tract on the *Rise of the Parochial System in England*—

"it must be always remembered that in the view of the Church, tithes other than first fruits, and tithes of increase, were destined not to provide a maintenance for the clergy, but for the relief and support of the poor; and the rector, whether of a religious house or parochial incumbent, was supposed to administer them for these purposes, he being only a ruler or administrator of them. . . .

During the whole of the time that the English Church was ruled as an integral part of the Western Patriarchate, this view of the destination of tithes, and of the rector's or administrator's duty in respect of them, was never lost sight of."

In regard, then, to the general notion of a parish, and as to how the parochial system was extended and developed in England, Mr. Reichel's general summary at the end of his tract is important and interesting. It began, he concludes, in Saxon times, and assumed its complete form in the Councils of London and Westminster in the twelfth century. In the centuries which followed, and with which we are concerned, the administration of tithes was frequently entrusted to the actual incumbent, and in some cases to religious houses or collegiate establishments. But in any case the duty of the administrator was understood and acknowledged, and, it must be supposed, acted upon. The mistaken notion as to this has arisen probably from a neglect to bear in mind what happened at the period of the Reformation.

"At and since the Reformation," says our author, "custom has persistently regarded such administrations as endowments of the parson, clerical or lay, not as gifts to the poor, of which he is only the administrator. Monastic parsons were then simply deprived of them by law, and the administrations they held were granted as property to laymen, whilst, to meet the wishes of a married clergy, parochial incumbents were released from all claims at law for charitable purposes."

It is important to bear in mind that a properly organised "parish" was a corporation, and acted as a "corporation," and as such no lords of the manor or political personages had any sort of power or authority over it. They might be, and,

in fact, of course always were, members of the corporation-parishioners—and their positions entitled them to respect and gave, no doubt, authority to their suggestions. But the records of the old parishes that have come down to our time clearly prove that "Squire-rule" over parson and people in mediæval parochial life did not exist. Sometimes, no doubt, the "great men" of a place tried to have their own way, but they were quickly shown that the "corporation" of the parish was under the protection of a power greater than any they possessed—the power of the Church; and, as a matter of fact, this was so well recognised that it is difficult enough to find individual instances of any great landlords who were willing to try conclusions with the paramount Spiritual authority. To "Holy Mother Church" all were the same, and within God's House the tenant, the villain, and the serf stood side by side with the overlord and master. In fact, at times, as when a feast fell upon a day when work had to be done by custom for the lord of the manor, the law of the Church forbade these servile works, and the master had perforce to acquiesce. In other words, the parish, so far as it was organised, had been the creation of the Church, and was free.

"The parish," writes Bishop Hobhouse, "was the community of the township organised for Church purposes, and subject to Church discipline, with a constitution which recognised the rights of the whole body as an aggregate, and the right of every adult member, *whether man or woman*, to a voice in self-government, but at the same time kept the self-governing community under a system of inspection and restraint by a central authority outside the parish boundaries."

One thing especially bound the parish together most firmly. The fact that the belief and practice of all was the same—that every soul in the parish worshipped in the same church and in the same way, that all kept the same fasts and feasts and were assisted by the same Sacraments, gave a unity to the corporation almost impossible now to conceive. But over and above this, the knowledge that parson and people were bound together by the parochial system, and, so to speak, existed for each other, strengthened even the ties of pure religion. In nearly all the documents illustrating parish life of, say, the fifteenth century, there is evidence of the community of purpose of pastor and people which is really astounding. As already pointed out, every rector and vicar throughout England not only regarded himself in theory as a steward of the *panis Dominicus* (the Lord's Bread), under which name was meant charity to all that came to claim support; but if the laws of the English Church and Lyndwood's authoritative gloss mean anything whatever, this sacred duty was carried out in practice. Wherever rectors do not reside in the place of their cures, says Archbishop Peckham, they are bound to keep proctors or agents to exercise proper hospitality or charity as far as the means of their churches will allow, and at the very least to relieve every parishioner in extreme necessity; and the gloss adds that the rector of a church on the high-road and in a frequented place will obviously have to spend much more than one whose cure lies off the beaten track. For this reason, it says, the clergy of the churches in England are well endowed, especially where the calls upon them for this hospitality are great.

This duty of considering the revenues of a parish as common property to be held in trust for the needs of hospitality and the relief of the poor is inculcated in every tract dealing with the subject, and acknowledged in numberless ways. In the will of William Sheffield, Dean of York in 1496, for example, the testator, after making some small bequests, says—

"I will that the rest of my goods be distributed amongst the poor, in all the benefices that I have ever held or now hold—more or less being given according to the length of time I have lived in them and maintained hospitality—for the property of a church is the property of the poor, and for this reason the conscience is greatly burdened in the disposal of the goods of the Church. And for the heavy responsibility of these distributions, Jesus have mercy."

In another case, in the diocese of Exeter in 1440, a rector is specially praised at a Visitation, and it is declared that he "has done much good, in his parish, because he has rebuilt the chancel of his church, and has added two good rooms, one for himself, and 'one to exercise hospitality' in behalf of those who need it."

Here, before speaking of the working of a parish in pre-Reformation days, it may be convenient briefly to treat about the somewhat intricate question of tithes. The gifts offered by the faithful to the Church for the support of the ministers, the upkeep of its officers, or as an acknowledgment of special services, such as baptisms, marriages, the churching of women, and burials, were roughly classed under two main divisions—tithes and oblations. The latter were personal, and to a large extent voluntary, although custom had somewhat determined the minimum fees which all who could

were expected to pay for services exercised in their behalf. In England, as Lyndwood notes, oblations were almost wholly made in the form of money ; and by law these offerings were regarded more as being the personal property of the priests than were tithes, and for this reason they might be spent more freely, according to the wishes of the clergy. Still, even in regard to this, the insertion of the word "generally" in the law seems to the author of the gloss to point to the fact that the clergy are not altogether free as to the application of any surplus from these oblations made to them, if for no other reason than because any apparent squandering of such ecclesiastical revenues might "tend to destroy the devotion of the people." In oblations of this sort, of course, are not included such as were made in kind for the service of the altar and offered to the priest during the Mass, such as the bread and wine for the Sacrifice, brought in turns by the chief parishioners on Sundays and Feast-days.

Tithes are commonly defined as "the tenth part of all fruits and profits justly acquired, owed to God in recognition of His supreme dominion over man, and to be paid to the ministers of the Church." In the Old Dispensation this recognition was made by Abraham, promised under vow by Jacob, and legally regulated by Moses. In early Christian times, if there is no evidence of the existence of the practice, it is only because the voluntary offerings of the faithful were ample to supply the needs of the Church and its ministers, whilst the community of goods practised by the first Christians hardly allowed the existence of real poverty among them. As the Church grew, its needs, and in

particular the less obvious needs of the faithful poor, required some more regular and certain resources than the irregular and voluntary alms of its richer members. So in the Council of Macon in A.D. 585 is found the first express declaration of the Christian obligation of paying tithes, not indeed as a new law, but as the assertion of an admitted Christian principle. In the eighth century these payments began to be regularly made throughout the Western Church, and in England, according to the Saxon Chronicle, in A.D. 855 the father of King Alfred, Ethelwulf of Wessex, is said to have "assigned to the Church the tenth part of his land all over his kingdom for the love of God and his own everlasting weal." In this it is almost certain that the Chronicle is wrong in the form of expression, and that what Ethelwulf did was to decree the payment of a tithe of the produce, and not hand over a tenth of the land as an endowment of the Church. And here it may be well to remark that there was obviously nothing sacro-sanct about the tenth portion payable for Church purposes. It is merely a portion that is taken to represent what is generally a fair offering to God, and one not too burdensome on those who had to pay. In some cases it might be and indeed, according to custom, was greater or less in different places.

Tithes were usually divided into two kinds—*predial* and *personal;* "some coming of the earth," says the author of *Dives and Pauper*, "as corn, wine, bestayle, that is brought forth by the land, and such thyngs be clepyd *predyales* in latyn. Some thyngs comyth oonly of the person, as be merchandy and werkmanschyp, and such bene clepyd *personales* in latyn." In these a man is to account his expenses,

and then see whether he has gained, and so pay a tithe of his profit; but this may not be done in the case of the predial tithes. In these "he is not to count his expenses, but pay his tithe of all, neither the worst nor the best, but as it comes."

The Council of Merton, in 1305, set forth a schedule of the things upon which tithes had to be paid by law; this included the cutting and felling of trees and woods, the pasturage of the forests, and the sale of the timber; the profits of vineyards, fisheries, rivers, dovecots, and fish-stews; the fruits of trees, the offspring of animals, the grass harvest, and that of all things sown; of fruits, of warrens of wild animals, of hawking, of gardens and manses, of wool, flax, and wine; of grain and of turf, where it was dug and dried; of pea-fowl, swans, and capons; of geese and ducks; of lambs, calves, and colts, of hedge cuttings, of eggs, of rabbits, of bees with their honey and wax; together with the profits from mills, hunting, handicrafts of all sorts, and every manner of business. As to these, *Dives and Pauper*, on the authority of canonists, teaches that people should be reminded that tithe is, in the first place, an acknowledgment to God for what He has Himself first given to men. Consequently, all should willingly pay this tribute to Him, and thus continue to deserve His blessings: also, that they should remember that nothing was exempt from this tribute—wind-mills and water-mills, tanneries and fulling-mills, all mines of silver and other metals, all quarries of stone, and all profits of the merchant and the craftsman.

Predial tithe, in a word, was payable on the annual crops of corn, wine, oil, and fruits, etc., and on the natural increase

of cattle, including milk and cheese. These predial tithes were distinguished, again, into the *Greater* tithe—that is, on corn, wine, and wool; and the *Lesser* tithe on vegetables and fruits, etc. The tithes *personal* were to be paid on profits of trade and business. All this was acknowledged as sanctioned or ordered by "Divine law or custom."

All tithes on the land-predial were to be paid to the rector of the parish in which the land was situated or the animals usually fed; all tithes on business occupation, to the parish where the tithe-payer was bound by law to receive the Sacraments. "Tithes personal," says the author above quoted, "as of merchandise and of crafte, man shall payen to his parish church where he dwelleth and taketh his Sacraments and heareth his service, but tithes predial shall been payed to the church to which the manor and the land belongeth, unless custom be in the contrary." Difficulties sometimes necessarily arose as to cases where flocks of sheep, etc., were at different times in different parishes, but by episcopal constitutions this was settled on the common-sense principle of dividing the tithe receivable, according to the proportion of the time spent in each parish. It was otherwise in the case of cattle feeding on land in several parishes —"horn with horn," as the natives called such a practice; in this case the tithe was to be paid to the parish in which the permanent sheds of the cattle at the farmstead were situated. With difficulties of this nature it is not necessary to deal, and the foregoing examples are given merely to show how universal the practice was and how carefully the obligation was fulfilled.

Bishop Peter Quivel, in the Synod of Exeter, held in

1287, lays down several principles which are to guide the authorities in the levying of tithes. It will be remembered that it is from these Constitutions that so much as to the practical working of the Church of England in the thirteenth century is known. From what he says as to tithes, it seems that there was growing up a practice of seeking to deduct the cost of production before counting the tithe. This might seem not unreasonable, but the bishop condemns it, and says that "expenses are by no means to be deducted first." In the same way he refused to recognise as right any claim to set aside a tenth part of a field and to count as tithe of the whole whatever was grown upon that portion. So, too, in the west country a practice had grown up in certain places for farmers to refuse to pay their dues until the parson had given a harvest feast and a pair of gloves to the workmen. This is forbidden as contrary to law. In the same way, as the bishop says, "many and well-nigh unanswerable questions" arose in the levying of the tithe; but from time to time these were made the subject of synodal directions, as may be seen in Wilkins' great collection, and in practice these difficulties would appear generally to have answered themselves by the application of a little common sense, assisted by a measure of good-will, which most certainly existed in those days.

It is usually difficult to obtain information about the amounts of the tithe derived from the various sources tithe-able. Generally the accounts do not set out the items, and give merely the totals. For the diocese of Rochester, however, in 1536, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* gives the details in many instances. From these we learn that the tithe generally

had a twofold division ; for instance, the Rector of Huntingdon, besides £9 a year derived from the rectory house and the rent of 21 acres of pasture, accounted for the tithe of grain and hay, which produced, according to the then money value, 26*s.* 8*d.*, and the tithe of wool and of lambs, bringing in £4 8*s.* 9*d.* He received also an annual average of £17 2*s.* 5*d.* from oblations and private donations. In the same way the Vicar of Dartford received £16 13*s.* 4*d.* for the tithe of wool and lambs, £2 for the hay tithe, and £25 13*s.* 4*d.* for all other tithes and oblations.

A word must now be said about the impropriation of parochial tithes to cathedrals, monasteries, and collegiate establishments. It is very generally stated that this was one of the great abuses of the mediæval Church redressed at the time of the Reformation. Without in any way wishing to defend the practice of assigning tithes to purposes other than the work of the parish in which they were receivable, it should in justice be borne in mind that this was never done without the sanction of the bishop, and upon the condition that the vicar should receive amply sufficient for his support and for the purpose of his parochial work. The notion of "the great robbery" of parishes to endow monasteries, and of the "miserable stipends" on which those who occupied the post of vicars existed or starved, is in view of records not borne out by facts. The "miserable stipends" formed only part of the emoluments of those who served impropriated churches ; they had also the lesser tithes and all oblations made to them, and the bishops were bound by law to see, and in fact did see, that their income was sufficient. Moreover, though not very numerous, there are

in the episcopal registers a sufficient number of examples to show that the arrangements, made between the impropriators and the vicar, and sanctioned by the bishop, were open to readjustment if necessary. At East Anthony, in the diocese of Exeter, for example, this is exemplified, and the settlement made by Bishop Grandisson is confirmed by Bishop Stapeldon, and the principle is laid down that "the Bishop and his successors have power, should they see fit, to encrease, diminish, or change the amount to be paid to the holder of the vicarage and the conditions upon which it is held."

It will be useful to take one or two examples of the division of tithes between the impropriator and vicar in an impropriated living. The rectory of Preston, in the county of Kent, for instance, was impropriated to St. Augustine's, Canterbury, which derived £16 a year from it. Out of this sum 53*s.* 5*d.* in money was paid by way of pension to the vicar, and 6*s.* 8*d.* in lieu of a certain quantity of corn—in all £3. This, however, was not by any means the whole income enjoyed by the vicar, for he also received from the lesser tithes and personal oblations another £6 15*s.*, bringing his stipend up to the sum of £9 15*s.* a year, or ample, according to the value of money in the sixteenth century, to live upon. Again, the church of Monketon, and that of Birchington, in the same county of Kent, were impropriated to the monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury. From them the monks derived £66 13*s.* 10*d.* for their house, and out of this £1 12*s.* 4*d.* had to be spent upon the poor of the place, and £12 1*s.* 8*d.* was paid to the vicar as his stipend. He received also £11 annually from tithes and

oblations, and paid two curates, to serve Birchington and another annexed chapel, £9 13*s.* 4*d.* This left him still £13 8*s.* 4*d.* as his own annual stipend, which was about three times what he considered sufficient for each of his curates. To take one more example: from the church of Chistlett the monks of St. Augustine's, Canterbury—who, by the way, were lords of the manor—received from the rectorial tithes £40 a year; the vicar's tithes, together with the glebe lands, bringing him £30 a year.

It would appear from these instances, which could be multiplied indefinitely, that, except for the fact that tithe was taken from the district where it was raised, the grievance of which so much has been made, is an academic rather than a real one, and one of modern invention rather than one existing in the Middle Ages. That there were complaints occasionally may be allowed. Still, not only were they rare, but in the episcopal registers it may be seen that, in the few instances where they came before the bishop, they were declared to be groundless. They generally arose out of the Visitations when the vicar had been ordered to repair the chancel of his church, or procure some choir-books, or to do some other work for which by law the incumbent was held responsible. The vicar pleaded as his excuse for the dilapidation, or for his inability to do the work required, that the impropriator should be made to do all this, as he took so much of the tithe away from the place. It is rarely indeed that such a claim was considered reasonable, and for the most part the reply was that this had been considered at the time of the original impropriation, and that sufficient had been allowed to the vicar to carry out these legal

obligations, and that all things had been made fitting and all repairs seen to before the vicarage had been established.

The grounds upon which impropriation made by lawful authority was justified in the Middle Ages were, apparently, that originally tithe had been paid to the bishop of the diocese for the general good of the entire district. By his administration of these diocesan funds he was enabled to assist good works of every kind at his discretion. When in process of time the parish became a sub-unit of administration, the local tithe passed into the administration of the local parson; but never without the dormant notion, not only of episcopal control, but fundamentally of ultimate episcopal authority over it. Up to the Reformation it was taught that tithe really ought to be divided into four parts: one part to go to the bishop, if he needed it; one to the ministers; one to the poor; and the fourth part for the repair of the church fabric. The notion that it was the great landowners who in the first instance endowed the parish churches with tithes, and subsequently took them, or a portion of them, away and gave them to religious houses and colleges, is for the most part quite imaginary. Tithe was, as already pointed out, the recognition of God's supreme authority over the world, and a public acknowledgment that all things came from His hands, and the idea, which is a product of modern notions, that it was a charge made upon the land for the benefit of religion, is wholly alien to the spirit of pre-Reformation days. The very fact that this does not explain the existence of personal tithes, shows that the giving of tithes generally did not depend upon the generosity of any landowner or lord of the manor.

Neither was the tithe ever regarded as the absolute property of the incumbent. Besides his recognised duty in regard to the repairs of the chancel, the poor were regarded as having legal claims upon what was received by him. What seems to us a somewhat strange custom was occasionally practised in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This was the farming out of tithes by the rectors, or, in other words, raising money upon their expected receipts. For this the sanction of the bishop had previously to be obtained, and any pledging of the tithe for more than the current year was illegal. Beyond this, where a rector or prelate put his benefice out to farm, according to the law, he was bound to get four of his parishioners, approved by the bishop, to be surety for the faithful payment of the full portion (*pinguis portio*) of the tithe due to the poor of the parish. "I hold," however, says the canonist Lyndwood, that this is not necessary "in the case of a rector or prelate, who, after farming out his tithes lawfully, continues to live in his benefice, unless he is suspected of not intending to succour those in poverty."

The duty of paying lawful tithes was constantly inculcated by synodal decrees, by bishops' letters, and from the pulpit. Thus John Myrc, in his *Instructions for Parish Priests*, tells them—

> "Teche hem also welle and greythe
> How they schell paye here teythe
> Of all thynge that doth hem newe
> They shuld teythe welle and trewe
> After the custome of that cuntraye
> Every mon hys teythynge schale pay."

The author, however, says that he has no need to speak much

of that matter, as priests will see to it that their tithes are paid in due time; and in a *Sarum Manuale* it is found set down that by law "men of religion, freres, and all other," who "go about and preache Goddes worde," are commanded to preach eight times in the year upon the nature of tithes and on the obligation of paying them to the parish priests. That this duty was recognised, and that on the whole it was cheerfully complied with in the Middle Ages, would appear to be certain. It is, moreover, no less apparent that these payments were regarded, not in the light of a charge upon the land, but of a genuine acknowledgment to God of His supreme governance of the world, that all things were His, and that in His hands were the ends of the earth. The general spirit in which the obligation was regarded may be seen in the wills of the period, where the testators not only desired that all lawful tithes might be paid from their estates, but very generally left benefactions to their parish churches "for tithes forgotten."

CHAPTER II

THE PARISH CHURCH

THE "parish" is described by Bishop Hobhouse as the community dwelling in an area defined by the Church, organised for Church purposes, and subject to Church authority. "Within this area," he says, "every resident was a parishioner, and, as such, owed his duty of worship and contribution to one stated church, and his duty of confession and submission to the official guidance of a stated pastor, entitled his Rector, or to the Rector's deputy, entitled Vicar."

The centre of every mediæval parish, then, was its church. It was, as it were, the mainspring of the machinery of parochial life, which cannot be understood without a full knowledge of its position in regard to the people generally, and of all that it was to the inhabitants of a district in pre-Reformation days.

For our present purposes, we need not, of course, concern ourselves with trying to solve the vexed question as to who it was that first built the parochial churches. About this there is, and probably will remain, much obscurity. In the first instance, in England, very possibly, they were the creation of some nobles or rich landlords, who desired to secure the

services of religion for the people dwelling upon their estates, as tenants, servants, or serfs, and who, having obtained from the bishop of the district his leave to set up an oratory or church, obtained the ministration of a priest. Whatever the origin, it is certain that long before the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries the parish church had practically come to be the property of the parishioners generally in a very definite manner, and, with certain exceptions, to which reference will presently be made, upon the inhabitants of a parochial district as a corporation lay the duty of repairing and rebuilding the fabric, of beautifying the edifice, of maintaining the services, and of seeing generally to its well-being. This they did as a matter of well-recognised obligation and duty; but obviously also as a matter which afforded them much satisfaction and pleasure.

The fabric of the church consisted of the *nave*, with its chapels and aisles, when it had any, and the *chancel*, which included the choir and presbytery. In England, at least, there was a well-recognised and very general distinction between the chancel and the nave. The former was sometimes called the "parson's freehold," and to him belonged the entire care of his "chancel," and the duty of keeping it in repair. In fact, it was not disputed that one part of the tithe received by the priest from the parish was intended to furnish him with ample means for fulfilling this duty, and in the event of death removing an incumbent, where there were dilapidations in the chancel, which had not been seen to by him, his successor could, and frequently did, claim compensation from the heirs of the deceased.

The synodal directions given with regard to the care and

repair of the chancels are definite. "In parish churches," says one of 1350, taken as an example, "the chancel is to be found and maintained fittingly in all things by the Rector." Bishop Brantyngham, of Exeter, issued a "declaration" as to the custom in his diocese as laid down by his predecessor, Bishop Quivil. In this he says that—

"the work of constructing 'and repairing the chancels of all mother churches belongs to the rectors of the parishes; but that of the naves pertains to the parishioners, without regard to any contrary custom. In the case of chapels, which have their distinct parochial district, the entire duty of maintenance belongs to the parishioners of the chapel, as it is for their convenience such chapels are built, and, moreover, they may be obliged to assist, in case of need, the mother church."

This was the ordinary rule in England, as we see from the gloss on the Constitutions of Cardinal Othoboni, where Lyndwood calls it "the common custom in England that the parishioners repair the nave of the church where they sit," and that if the rector has the fourth part of the tithe, which was intended for the repairs of the church, he should by law see to all the repairs. "By praiseworthy custom," in England, however, the author adds, the repair of the chancel only is an obligation of the rector, although he cannot entirely free himself of all responsibility for the rest of the church. Sometimes, however, as the canonist notes, as, for example, in some London churches and elsewhere, the care of the chancel is also a matter for the parishioners, and the parson, although taking "the fourth part of the tithe" intended to meet the general expenses of church repairs, is yet held to be free of the obligation.

Sometimes, as may be seen in the visitations of parochial churches, difficulties arose about the precise obligation of parson and people as to the repair even of the chancel. In the Register of Bishop Stapledon, for instance, at the inquiry held in 1301, at St. Mary Church, the parishioners represented that, up to the time of the then vicar, they had been accustomed to repair the chancel, and because of this the tithe on all store cattle had not been demanded of them. The new vicar had made them pay this, but yet had not done the repairs to the chancel, and wanted them to continue to do so. So, too, during Bishop Grandisson's episcopate, the question whether the parishioners paid the "decimas instauri" was the determining reason as to whether they should be compelled to repair the chancels or not.

In regard to the care of the fabric the case of appropriated churches was somewhat peculiar. The corporation to which the living was impropriated held the position of rector, the cure being administered by a vicar appointed by it and licensed by the bishop, just as in the case of a nomination to any benefice by a patron. As a rule the religious house, college, or official holding the impropriated tithes, got rid of the rectorial obligation of seeing to the maintenance of the chancel, by arranging with the bishop that the vicar should have sufficient regular income to cover all the expenses of dilapidations. In this case the usual practice was that, upon first becoming lawfully possessed of the appropriated tithe, the corporation was bound by the bishop, as one condition of his assent, to place the chancel in thorough repair and to see that everything, which the rector had been bound by custom to provide, was in good order. After this had been done,

it was calculated, and indeed arranged, that out of the income of the vicar these could be maintained in good order. The arrangement, however, was subject to revision by the bishop, and although in practice the original agreement was usually upheld, there are to be found examples of the holders of impropriated tithes being compelled by the ecclesiastical authority to contribute to the repairs of chancels, etc., and even to undertake the entire work, where the means of the vicars were obviously inadequate to do what was necessary.

Some examples of this will illustrate the matter more completely than any statement of the practice. In 1296, Bishop Thomas de Bytton, of Exeter, was called upon to adjudicate upon this question in regard to the vicarage of Morwenstowe, the greater tithes of which had been previously appropriated to the Hospital of St. John at Bridgewater by Bishop Peter Quivil, with the consent of his canons. The grant had been made with the provision that fitting support should be allowed for the vicarage, the amount to be determined and arranged by the bishop and his successors. This, Bishop de Bytton did, in fact, determine by the document referred to. The vicar, according to this settlement, by reason of his vicarage, was to take certain tithes, which, amongst others, were to include that of all the hay and the mills in the whole parish, as well as the rent of certain crofts, etc. The brethren of the Hospital were to find or renew all the ornaments and books not provided by the parishioners, and it was agreed that these, once being set right, must afterwards be maintained by the vicar. He was also to see to all ordinary repairs, and even extraordinary repairs up to the amount of the fourth part of the tithe received by him. But

"any other extraordinary expense, together with the upkeep, repair, or rebuilding of the chancel of the church, was to be met by the said religious brethren" of the Hospital of Bridgewater.

That this settlement was not at all exceptional could be proved by many documents; one must suffice. When Bodmin church was rebuilt between the years 1469 and 1472 the patrons, the Monastery of St. Petrock, defrayed the entire expenses connected with the chancel. On the other hand, to illustrate the usual practice, the case of the vicarage of Launcells in Devonshire may be cited. The Abbot and Monastery of Hartland held the appropriated tithes, and in 1382, the chancel standing in need of great repairs, apparently amounting almost to rebuilding, the vicar refused to carry out the injunctions of the archdeacon forthwith to undertake the work, on the plea that this was the duty of the Abbey of Hartland. The convent denied their obligation, but submitted themselves in the matter to the judgment of the bishop of the diocese. After holding an inquiry, Bishop Thomas Brantyngham declared that the vicar received tithes for the purpose of carrying out all repairs to the chancel, and that consequently the monks were free from the obligation.

What the material church was to the parishioners of a mediæval parish is well described in the synodical Constitutions of Bishop Woodlock, of Winchester, at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

"If the Israelites," he says, "living in the shadow of the law, required specially dedicated places in which to worship the Lord, with how much more reason are Christians, to whom the loving-kindness and the humanity of the Saviour has appeared, bound by all

the means at their disposal to obtain consecrated churches, in which day by day the Son of God is offered in Sacrifice."

Then after saying that churches that have not been consecrated are to be solemnly dedicated as soon as possible, he continues—

"The anniversaries of the dedications of parish churches are to be kept by the parishioners, and those attending chapels in the neighbourhood not themselves dedicated. The day and the year of the consecration, with the name of the consecrating prelates, are to be entered in the calendar and other books belonging to the church."

The dedication of the church to God was the essential condition of its endowment. According to Bracton, the dower made to the church with church lands at its dedication, was a possession of "pure and free alms," in distinction "from a lay feud," seeing that it "is with more propriety called free, since it is dedicated as it were to God."

"If," says the Constitution of Cardinal Otho for the English Church—"if under the Old Testament the Temple was dedicated to God for the offering of dead animals, with how much more reason should the churches of the New Law be specially consecrated to Him when on the altars is daily offered for us by the hands of the priest the living and true Victim, that is, Christ, the only-begotten Son of God."

The reverence due to churches, and things once dedicated to the service of churches, was universal in the Middle Ages. Cloths, used as chrism cloths at Baptism or Confirmation, were to be devoted to ecclesiastical purposes or destroyed, and those who turned anything thus once offered to God to any secular use were considered gravely blameworthy. The

gloss upon a Constitution of St. Edmund of Canterbury to this effect extends this prohibition of desecration to everything connected at any time with a church. Even the woodwork of a building, once dedicated, was to be destroyed, unless it was capable of being used for another ecclesiastical purpose. So too the "cloths used on the altar, the seats, candlesticks, veils, and sacred vestments too old to use," were to be burnt and the ashes buried.

The parishioners, as already pointed out, were bound by law and custom to provide for the repair of the nave of their parish church, and for the general upkeep of the church services. There was little need to compel them to fulfil this duty, for the churchwardens' accounts and other documents, especially during the fifteenth century, when we have the fullest information, show us that over the entire length and breadth of England the people were gladly rebuilding and beautifying their parish churches. A few examples of this spirit may be of interest as showing what God's house was to the entire people in pre-Reformation days. The labours of Prebendary Hingeston-Randolph on the diocesan registers of the Exeter diocese enable the inquirer into parochial manners and customs of the past to find ample material. In the register of Bishop Stafford of Exeter (1394–1419) an account of the rebuilding of the parish church of Broadhempston is given. The parishioners, about A.D. 1400, petitioned the bishop to be allowed to rebuild their church: they represented that it was in a ruinous condition and notoriously clumsily constructed. It was their wish, they said, to build it on a larger scale, and in a different part of the churchyard. To this the bishop assented, on condition of their promising to complete

the new church within two years of pulling down the old, and he granted an Indulgence to all who should contribute to "so great and pious a work." On the 22nd November, 1401, the work of the new church was apparently far enough advanced for use, for a licence was granted for one year to celebrate Divine service "in the church or basilica newly erected and constructed in the cemetery," and this licence was twice renewed for the years 1402 and 1403.

The editor of the *Receipts and Expenses in Building Bodmin Church*, published by the *Camden Society*, says that "there is scarcely a parish in Cornwall that does not bear testimony to the energy displayed in church restoration" in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. He might have added that like activity is manifested at this time in almost every quarter of England; but certainly Bodmin furnishes us with an interesting example of the religious energy displayed by the inhabitants of a mediæval parish. For the year 1469–70 the wardens account for £196 7*s.* 4½*d.* collected and £194 3*s.* 6½*d.* spent—large sums considering the then value of money, and specially great when it is remembered that besides this there were the gifts of material, such as windows, trees, etc., and that the labour of the workmen was given without other reward than what came from their love of the work. From the preface of the editor of these accounts we glean some interesting particulars, all the more interesting as we have no reason to think that Bodmin was any exception. The accounts "exhibit a remarkable unanimity in the good work. Every one seems to have given according to his means and up to his means. Many who gave money gave labour also; many who could not give money laboured as best they

might, and others gave what they could." We have gifts of lambs, of a cow, and of a goose. One woman, in addition to her subscription, sold her crock for 20*d.*; and all found its way into the common treasury. No age or sex seems to have kept aloof. We find an "hold woman" contributing 3*s.* 4½*d.*, while the maidens in Fore Street and Bore Street gave subscriptions in addition to the sums received from the Guild of Virgins in the same streets. The vicar gave his year's salary, and the "parish people" who lived out of the town "contributed 19*s.*" After an examination of the accounts, the editor attributes the working up of the zeal of the people to the guilds, and he adds that "religious life permeated society in the Middle Ages, particularly in the fifteenth century, through the minor confraternities." Of these societies it will be necessary to write at some length later, and here it will be sufficient to say that almost every inhabitant of Bodmin appears to have belonged to one or more of these societies. From the long list of voluntary subscriptions, it appears that all were eager to have a part in the work of building up their church—a church which should be a credit to Bodmin. All sorts and conditions of men and women are entered as contributors on the roll of parishioners, more than 460 in number. Servants appear as well as masters and mistresses, sons and daughters as well as their fathers and mothers.

The same sort of story is told in every set of parish accounts that we possess—a story of popular devotion to the material fabric of the parish church. To take another and later example: At St. Mary's, Cambridge, 1515, it was necessary to build a porch and a vestry, and the people determined to make a voluntary collection for the work each

Sunday during the last six months of the year. At these, from 6*s.* to 8*s.*—from £4 to £5 of our money—was gathered each time, and the building was carried out under the supervision of the churchwardens.

The evidence of mediæval wills is the same as to this very general interest in church building. For example, Robert Dacres of Beverley, a weaver, who died in 1498, left £16 for the making of the north aisle of the church—the parish church in which he had worshipped—provided the wardens began the work within a year. If they did not do so, then the money was to be spent on ornamenting the church. So, too, the will of Robert Pynbey, a chantrey priest of Hornby, shows that, conjointly with another priest, he had established a chantry, having previously built the south aisle of Hornby parish church. So, too, in 1490, the sub-dean of York leaves many legacies to assist in the repairs of the various churches with which he had been connected. In the same way some of the chantry certificates of the reign of Edward VI. reveal the fact that lands had been left to the churchwardens to sell for the purpose of rebuilding certain parish churches, and that they had been disposed of to that end.

It must, of course, be remembered that buildings and repairs of this kind were not lightly undertaken by the wardens without the full knowledge and consent of the parishioners generally. For example, in 1512–13 it was proposed to do some extensive works at St. Mary-at-Hill in London, and the entry in the churchwardens' book is as follows:—

"It is determined that they shall go in hand with the building of the church at March next. Memorandum: that John Allthorpe

and Stephen Sondyrson have promised to take charge and keep reckoning to pay all such workmen as shall make the battlements of our church of brick or stone or lead, as shall be thought best and determined by Mr. Alderman and the parishioners, and Mr. Parson is to assist them with his good diligence and wisdom to the best that he can, for the same: and Thomas Monders is chosen by the said parish to wait upon the said Stephen and Allthorpe in their absence and at their commandment for the furtherance of the same work."

The obligation of all to contribute to the common work of God's house was well understood, and it was taught in many books of instructions popular in those days. For example, in *Dives and Pauper* the former is made to declare that "many say, God is in no lond so well served in holy Church, nor so much worshipped in holy Church, as He is in this lond of England. For so many fair churches, ne so good aray in churches, ne so fair service, as many say is in none other lond as it is in this lond." *Pauper* does not deny this, but thinks that it is perhaps done from a spirit of pomp, "to have a name and worship thereby in the country, or for envy that one town hath against another." *Dives*, with this lead, suggests that it might be better if the money thus spent "in high churches, in rich vestments, in curious windows, and in great bells," were given to the poor. But *Pauper* urges that this is just what Judas thought, and declares that it is the common business of all, rich and poor alike, to look to the beautifying of God's house.

By law, then, according to the statute of Archbishop Peckham in 1280, which remained in force till the Reformation, the parish, broadly speaking, was bound to find all that

pertained to the services—such as vestments, chalice, missal, processional cross, paschal candle, etc.—and to keep the fabric and ornaments of the church proper in repair. In 1305 Archbishop Winchelsey somewhat enlarged the scope of the parish duties.

"For the future," he says, "we will and ordain that the parishioners be bound to provide all the following: Legend, Antiphonal, Grayle, Psalter, Tropary, Ordinale, Missal, Manual, Chalice, the best Vestment with Chasuble, Dalmatic and Tunicle, and a Cope for the choir with all their belongings (that is, amice, girdle, maniple and stole, etc.): the frontal for the High altar, with three cloths; three surplices; a rochet; the processional cross; a cross to carry to the sick; a thurible; a lantern; a bell to ring when the Body of Christ is carried to the sick; a pyx of ivory or silver for the Body of Christ; the Lenten veil; the Rogation Day banner; the bells with their cords; a bier to carry the dead upon; the Holy Water vat; the osculatorium for the Pax; the paschal candlestick; a font with its lock and key; the images in the church; the image of the patron Saint in the chancel; the enclosure wall of the cemetery; all repairs of the nave of the church, interior and exterior; repairs also in regard to the images of the crucifix and of the saints and to the glazed windows; all repairs of books and vestments, when such restorations shall be necessary." All other repairs, Archbishop Winchelsey adds, "of the chancel and of other things not the object of special custom or agreement, pertain to the Rectors or Vicars, and have to be done at their expense."

THURIBLE, FOUND NEAR PERSHORE

It did not, however, require any very great rigour on the part of ecclesiastical authorities to enforce this law. The various churchwarden accounts and the church inventories prove beyond dispute that the people of England were only too anxious to maintain and beautify their parish churches, and that frequently between neighbouring churches there was a holy rivalry in this labour of love. To take some examples

PAX

of this. The inventory of the parish church of Cranbrook, in Kent, made in 1509, gives the details of all gifts and donations, in order that the names of the donors and the particulars of their benefactions might be remembered. The value of the presents varies very considerably, but nothing apparently was too small to be noted. Thus we have a monstrance of silver gilt, which the wardens value at £20,

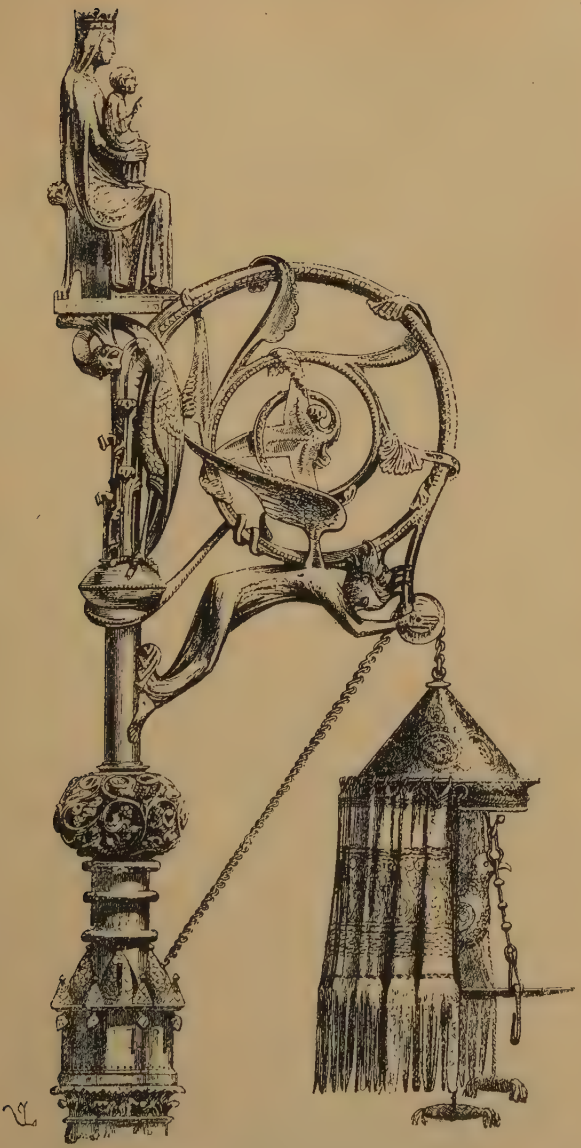
"of Sir Robert Egelyonby's gift." In regard to this donor the inventory says, "This Sir Robert was John Roberts' priest thirty years, and he never had other service or benefice." And it adds, "The said John Roberts was father to Walter Roberts, Esquire." Again, one John Hindley "gave three copes of purple velvet, whereof one was of velvet upon velvet, with images broidered;" and, *ad perpetuam rei memoriam*, adds the inventory, "he was grandfather of Gervase Hindley of Cushorn, and of Thomas (Hindley) of Cranbrook Street." And again, to take another example of these entries, it is recorded that the "two long candlesticks before our Lady's altar fronted with lions, and a towel on the rood of our Lady's chancel," were the gift of "old moder Hopper."

In the same way, the churchwardens' accounts of Leverton, a parish situated in the county of Lincoln about 6 miles from Boston, evidence the same voluntary effort on the part of the people to adorn their church. In 1492 William Murr left money for work at the Great Crucifix and to several of the altars. In 1495 a great effort was made to procure another bell, and we find the expenses for preparing the bell-chamber, for the carriage of the great bell, and for the hanging of it by one William Wright, of Benington. All the parish apparently contributed, and the parson promised 10*s.* 8*d.* towards the expenses; but when he came to settle, it was found that some one had paid for him. This was the above-named William Wright; and as the clergyman's name was John Wright, perhaps the kindly thought which prompted the payment came from some bond of relationship. Three years later it was determined to build the steeple, and the parishioners were eager for the work. The owner of a

neighbouring quarry gave leave to take whatever stone was required. "A tree was bought at Tombe Wood," and a carpenter was engaged for the scaffolding and timber work. The tree was sawn into boards; lime was purchased to make the mortar, and tubs to mix it in. Later, another tree was bought and cut up for scaffolding purposes. All was entirely the work of the parish, and the ordering of everything was done by the wardens the people had chosen, whilst each one took a lively and personal interest in the common work.

In 1503 another bell was made, and a deputation of the parish went to Boston to see it "shot." The local blacksmith, Richard Messur, made all the necessary "bolts and locks," and attended professionally to see it hung, although the chief responsibility rested upon John Red, "bellgedor of Boston," who had the "schotyng" of the bell, and received £3 6*s.* 8*d.* for his work. At the same time the parish paid for a Sanctus bell, which was made by the local plumber, and the young men of the parish formed themselves into a school to be taught how "to toll the bells." In the same year a new font was made for the church at Freeston, about three miles away, and a committee of the parish made two journeys, one to look at the progress of the work and another to pass and approve it.

For some few years the expenses were normal; but in 1512 the desire to possess more bells again came upon the parish. In the same year the people purchased "a pair of censer chains, when the parson was in London," and they renewed the device "for hanging up the Sacrament" over the altar. In 1516 the bells evidently did not ring well, and a man was brought over from Boston to set them right. In the same



BRACKET WITH SUSPENDED DOVE AND COVER

year there are entered expenses for hanging a lamp and for making "a lectern in the choir." The following year the north side of the church was found to stand in need of repair, and there are expenses for propping the wall up during the work. This year, also, the parish purchased a new vestment and a chalice; and in 1519, after the repairs, the bishop came to reconsecrate the church, and the people paid his fee of 40*s.* for doing so. In 1525 an item of expense is of interest: "To Isabel Frendyke for marking all the lynen clothis: St. Thomas' with a mark of black sylke +, and O. Lady's with a M."

SACRAMENTAL DOVE

In 1526 there was a movement to beautify the rood-screen. An "alybaster man," otherwise called "Robert Brook the carver," was procured, and money was gathered in the town for his support, and some who gave no money gave cheese. William Franckis, one of the parishioners, died this year, and left a legacy of 46*s.* 8*d.* to buy "images of alybaster to be set in ye rood-loft." There were apparently in all seventeen images, and "in earneste thereof" the carver was paid a shilling on account; but when he got to work he found that he could only do sixteen of the figures for the 46*s.* 8*d.*, at 3*s.* 4*d.* each. Apparently, however, William

Franckis had provided for contingencies; he had probably looked at the vacant niches during the many Sundays he had knelt in front of the rood, had determined that they must be all filled, and so had charged his wife Janet to see to it. At any rate, the widow found the other 3*s.* 4*d.*, "that every stage might be filled."

And so the parish life at Leverton went on without much change. The ordinary expenses were met out of the ordinary receipts, and when anything extraordinary was required the people were apparently ever ready to come forward to provide it. In 1528 there is a note to say that "John Bell, quondam Rector," on his deathbed gave to the wardens the sum of £6 13*s.* 4*d.* to be used upon the church. In 1531 a curious memorandum is worth recording. It is to this effect: on October 22, Richard Shepperd, the parson, called a meeting of the parish, to take into consideration the accounts of the late wardens. The meeting showed their entire confidence in the priest and their cordial unanimity with him by asking him to appoint the wardens for the following year, which he did. Also it was shown to the meeting that by the last will of Walter Bowsche, of Leverton, three acres of land had been left to the parish for the purpose of being sold, in order that with the proceeds a new cope might be bought. The will was apparently destroyed by the wardens, and the money obtained from the sale had been spent upon the church work in which at the time they were chiefly interested, namely, the making of bells. The parishioners determined that they were in conscience bound to rectify this plain breach of trust, and to make up the money for the new cope. Lastly, in 1540, the parson, John Wright, presented the parish with

a suite of red-purple vestments, and in recording this gift the wardens note in their account-book, "for the which you shall all specially pray for the souls of William Wright and Elizabeth his wife," the father and mother of the donor, "and other relations, as well them as be alive as them that be departed to the mercy of God, for whose lives and souls" these vestments are given "for the honour of God, His most Blessed Mother, our Lady St. Mary, and all His saints in heaven, and the blessed matron St. Helen, his patron, to be used at such principal feasts and times as it shall please the curates so long as they shall last."

In this way the names of benefactors and the memory of their good deeds were ever kept alive in the minds of those who benefited by their gifts. The parish treasury was not looked on as so much stock, the accumulation of years, of haphazard donations without definite history or purpose; but every article, vestment, banner, hanging, chalice, etc., called up some affectionate memory both of the living and the dead. On high day and feast day, when all that was best and richest in the parochial treasury was brought forth to deck the walls and statues and altars, the display of parish ornaments recalled to the minds of the people assembled within its walls to worship God the memory of good deeds done by generations of neighbours for the decoration of their sanctuary.

"The immense treasures in the churches," writes Dr. Jessopp, "were the joy and boast of every man and woman and child in England, who, day by day and week by week, assembled to worship in the old houses of God which they and their fathers had built, and whose every vestment and chalice, and candlestick and banner

organ and bells, and pictures and images, and altar and shrine, they look upon as their own, and part of their birthright."

It might reasonably be supposed that this was true only of the greater churches ; but this is not so. What strikes one so much in these parish accounts of bygone days is the richness of even small, out-of-the-way village churches. Where we would naturally be inclined to look for poverty and meanness, there is evidence to the contrary. To take an example or two. Morebath is a small, uplandish, remote parish of little importance on the borders of Exmoor ; the population, for the most part, have spent their energies in daily labour to secure the bare necessaries of life, and riches, at any rate, could never have been abundant. Morebath may consequently be taken as a fair sample of an obscure and poor village. For this hamlet we possess full accounts from the year 1530, and we find that at this time, and in this very poor, out-of-the-way place, there were no less than eight separate accounts kept of money intended for the support of different altars of devotions. For example, we have the "Stores" of the Chapels of our Lady and St. George, etc., and the Gilds of the young men and maidens of the parish. All these were kept and managed by the lay-elected officials of the societies—confraternities, I suppose, we should call them—and to their credit are entered numerous gifts of money and specific gifts of value of kind, such as cows, and swarms of bees, etc. Most of them had their little capital funds invested in cattle and sheep, the rent of which proved a considerable part of their revenues. In a word, these accounts furnish abundant and unmistakeable evidence of the active and intelligent interest

in the duty of supporting and adorning their church on the part of these simple country folk at large. What is true of this is true of every other similar account to a greater or less degree, and all these accounts show unmistakeably that the entire management of these parish funds was in the hands of the people.

Voluntary rates to clear off obligations contracted for the benefit of the community—such as the purchase of bells, the repair of the fabric, and even for the making of roads and bridges—were raised by the wardens. Collections for Peter's pence, for the support of the parish clerk, and for every variety of church and local purpose, are recorded, and the spirit of self-help manifested, on every page of these accounts. To return to Morebath. In 1528 a complete set of black vestments was purchased at a cost—considerable in those days—of £6 5*s.*, and to help in the common work the vicar gave up certain tithes in wool that he had been in the habit of receiving. These vestments, by the way, were only finished and paid for in 1547, just before the changes under Edward VI. rendered them useless. In 1538 the parish made a voluntary rate to purchase a new cope, and the general collections for this purpose produced some £3 6*s.* 8*d.* In 1534 the silver chalice was stolen, and at once, we are told, "ye yong men and maydens of ye parysshe dru themselves together, and at ther gyfts and provysyon they bought in another chalice without any charge of the parish." Sums of money, big and small; specific gifts in kind; the stuff or ornaments needed for vestments, were apparently always forthcoming when needed. Thus at one time a new cope is suggested, and Anne Tymwell, of Hayne,

gave the churchwardens her "gown and her ring"; Joan Tynnwell, a cloak and a girdle; and Richard Norman, "seven sheep and 3 shillings and 4 pence in money," towards the cost.

These examples could be multiplied to any extent, but the above will be sufficient to show the popular working of mediæval parishioners in support of their church. The same story of local government, popular interest, and ready self-help, as well as an unmistakeable spirit of affection for the parish church as theirs—their very own—is manifested by the people in every account we possess. Every adult of both sexes had a voice in the system, and the parson was little more in this regard than chairman of the village meetings, and, as I have more than once seen him described, "chief parishioner." In the management of the fabric, the service, and all things necessary for the due performance of these, the people were not merely called upon to pay, but it is clear the diocesan authorities evidently left to the parish a wise discretion. No doubt the higher ecclesiastical officials could interfere in theory, but in practice interference was obviously and wisely rare. It will be necessary in a subsequent chapter to describe the various methods employed to replenish the parochial exchequer. There was apparently seldom much difficulty in finding the necessary money, and it will be of interest to see how it was expended by some further examples.

CHAPTER III

THE PARISH CHURCH (*continued*)

IN the previous chapter the attention of the reader was directed mainly to the relations of priest and people to their parish church. The division of obligation for the upkeep of chancel and nave by general law and custom between the parson and his parishioners has been stated and explained, and the devotion of the people to the work of maintaining and beautifying God's house has been illustrated by various examples. In this chapter it is proposed to speak of the various parts of the church itself; and first of *the chancel*, which was that portion of the sacred edifice between the altar and the nave, so called because it was separated from the rest of the church by railings (*cancelli*). Frequently in England there was at this point a screen supporting a figure of our Lord upon the cross, with images of Mary and John on either side, and from this called the "Rood Screen." The size of the chancel naturally varied according to the importance of the church, but it may be said to have generally included some stalls or seats for the assistant clergy and the parish clerks. When, as in cathedral and conventual churches, this portion was made larger, it was known as the choir (*chorus*), from the band

ROOD SCREEN AND PULPIT, HABERTON CHURCH

service, clerics be not mixed up with lay people, and more especially with women, nor have communication with them, for in this way devotion may easily be diminished.

"Nevertheless," the bishop continues in this letter, written to a rector, "in your church report says that some laymen have taken the seats of the clergy in your chancel and still obstinately refuse to give them up. If this be so, the names are to be published from the pulpit, and if after that they still persist, the delinquents are to be punished according to the statutes."

The Altar.—The most prominent feature of the chancel, and indeed of the whole church, as being the very purpose for which the entire building was erected, and the centre round which all the services were performed, was the high altar (*summum*, or *magus altare*). "It is that," says the gloss upon a constitution of Archbishop Winchelsea, "to honour which the church is dedicated," and it is placed in the choir as in the most solemn part of the building. Originally, if we may judge from existing illuminations, the altar in English churches stood a little away from the eastern wall of the church, and had over it a canopy supported on pillars, between which curtains were suspended on rods, and drawn during the celebration of the sacred mysteries. Sometimes, as at West Grinstead, for example, behind the altar in the wall of the church was an ambry, or cupboard, to contain the consecrated vessels and the missal, etc., for Mass. Over the altar was generally suspended some covering or canopy as a manifestation of the reverence due to the place of Sacrifice, and the churchwardens' accounts contain frequent mention of expenses to repair and renew this *celatura*; for by custom, if not by

ST. MARTIN'S MASS, SHOWING DISPOSITION OF ALTAR FURNITURE—FOURTEENTH CENTURY

law, this was done at the cost of the parish. Under this canopy was suspended a vessel of ivory or silver, covered by a cone-like tabernacle or by a silken veil, hanging frequently from a crown of metal, in which was the reserved Blessed Sacrament. To this ancient practice Becon, in *The Displaying of the Popish Mass*, alludes, when he says, "Ye go unto the midst of the altar, and looking up to the pyx,

PYX, AND CANOPY, OPEN

where ye think your God to be, and making solemn courtesy, like womanly Joan, ye say the *Gloria in Excelsis*." And again, "Ye make solemn courtesy to your little idol that hangeth over the altar." This was one of the practices which were done away by the changes under Edward VI., and which the insurgents in Devon, in their fourth article, demanded should be restored: "We will have the Sacrament hang over the altar, and there to be worshipped."

In the wills of the fifteenth century we have instances of rich stuffs and silks being left for the covering of the Sacred Vessel, and of gold and jewels for the pix itself.

In a will of Elizabeth Bigod, for instance, is the following item: "To the monastery of Croxton my chain of gold to make a pyx for the Sacrament of the altar, and there to be graven about the said pyx this: *Abbot and convent of the same place, pray for the soul of Dame Elizabeth Bigod.*" In 1496 "Mr. Doctor Hatclyff, parson," of St. Mary-at-Hill in London, gave into the hands of the wardens "a pyx clothe for the high auter, of sipers frenged with gold, with knoppis of golde and sylke of Spaynesshe makyng." And at the same time two other coverings were made for this pyx; one of "green sylk and red, with knoppis sylver and gylt with corners goyng, of Mistress Duklyng's gyffte," and the other "of red velvelt with three crowns of laton." How carefully these presents were preserved may be judged by an entry of *2d.* in the accounts of 1513—seventeen years later—"for mending the pyx cloth that Mistress Duklyng gave the High Altar."

PYX CANOPY, CLOSED

The frontal of the altar made of silk or velvet, or in some instances of metal with jewels, was by law to be found by the parishioners; and numerous gifts are recorded of rich stuffs and velvets to vest the altar with becoming honour. The same in practice may be said of the other ornaments, which, although perhaps in strict law the parishioners were not bound to provide, they nevertheless did find very generally and very generously. The fee

payable to the bishop for the consecration of an altar after rebuilding or reconstruction is found as an item of expense in the accounts of the parish wardens. So, too, are the more constant fees, for the blessing of altar cloths and other altar linen and the hallowing of vestments, paid to the parson by the parish, as well as the occasional payment to a bishop for the consecration of the parish chalice.

On the altar between the two big candlesticks stood the crucifix. The author of *Dives and Pauper* explains why this should be upon the table of every altar in the following dialogue:—

"When a priest sayeth his Mass at the altar, commonly there is an image before him, and commonly it is a crucifix, stone, or tree, or portrayed"—(that is, of course, in stone, wood, or painting).

"*Dives.*—Why more a crucifix than another thing?

"*Pauper.*—For every Mass saying is a special mind-making of Christ's passion.

"*Dives.*—The skyle is good; say forth.

"*Pauper.*—Before the image the priest says his Mass and maketh the highest prayer that Holy Church can desire for salvation of the quick and the dead; he holds up his hands, he leneth (*i.e.* bows down), he kneels, and all the worship he can do, he does. Overmore, he offereth up the highest sacrifice and the best offering that any heart can devise; that is Christ, God's Son from Heaven, under the form of bread and wine. All this worship doth the priest at Mass afore the thing, and I hope there is no man nor woman so lewd that he will say that the priest singeth his Mass nor maketh his prayer, nor offers up God's Son, Christ Himself, to the thing.

"*Dives.*—God forbid."

On the altar, besides the two big candlesticks and the crucifix, were, as we learn from some inventories, three

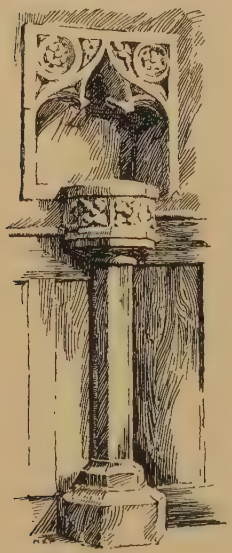
smaller candlesticks for low Mass—two to hold the tapers lighted during the whole service, and one for that which was ordered to be burning during the Canon, or more solemn part of the Mass. Most frequently hangings were suspended at the back and sides of the altar, and this was a favourite form of gift left to the churches in the wills of ladies in the fifteenth century. In some accounts and inventories mention is made of an "altar beam," evidently used for the purpose of placing candles upon it, and possibly also images and relics. Whether it was behind the altar, or supported by columns in front, or serving to bear up the canopy, is not certain. Canon Scott Robertson, writing about mediæval Folkestone, suggests that it was at the back of the altar, and that it was somewhat similar to what Gervase described at Canterbury in the twelfth century.

"At the eastern horns of the altar were two wooden columns, highly ornamented with gold and silver, which supported a great beam, the ends of which beam rested upon the capitals of the two pillars. The beam placed across the church and decorated with gold supported the Majesty of the Lord, the images of St. Dunstan and St. Elphege, also seven shrines, decorated with gold and silver and filled with the relics of many saints. Between the columns stood a cross, gilt, in the centre of which were sixty transparent crystals in a circle."

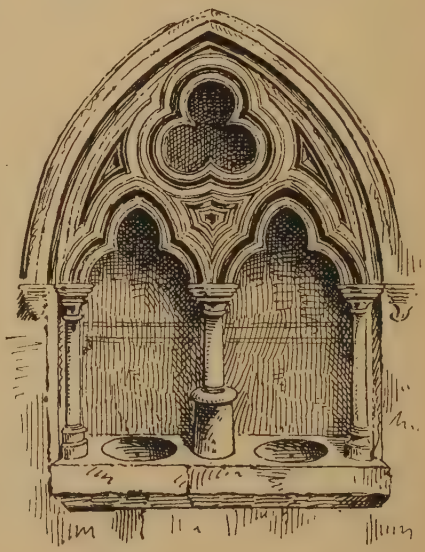
Two other features very general in the south side of every chancel must be noted—the *sedilia*, or seats for the ministers at the altar, and the *piscina*, or place where the vessels or cruets of wine and water were placed for use at Mass, and which was furnished with a basin, from which the water used to wash the priest's hands, etc., could drain away

into the earth of the consecrated cemetery. Originally the word *piscina* meant, of course, a "fish-pond," but came to mean, even in classical writers of the silver age, a basin or bath.

In the north wall of English churches, not unfrequently there was a niche for the lamp, which was always kept burning when the Blessed Sacrament was reserved on the



SHAFT PISCINA, TREBOROUGH



DOUBLE PISCINA, COWLINGE, SUFFOLK

altar. A good example of such a niche was discovered some years ago during the restoration of the parish church of West Grinstead. The smoke from the burning lamp in this instance had been allowed to escape by means of some loose stones leading to the eaves of the chancel wall, and when discovered the black of the smoke was still upon the upper stones of the niche.

Lastly, in recalling the chief features of a pre-Reformation chancel, what is called in the Constitution of Archbishop Winchelsea "the principal image" must not be forgotten. This image was that of the saint or saints, to whom the church was dedicated, and it was one of the ornaments which the parish was specially called upon to provide. From the wording of the law it might have a place anywhere in the chancel, but probably it would have stood in a niche on one side of the altar ; or, in the case of there being two patrons, the statues would have been placed on either side.

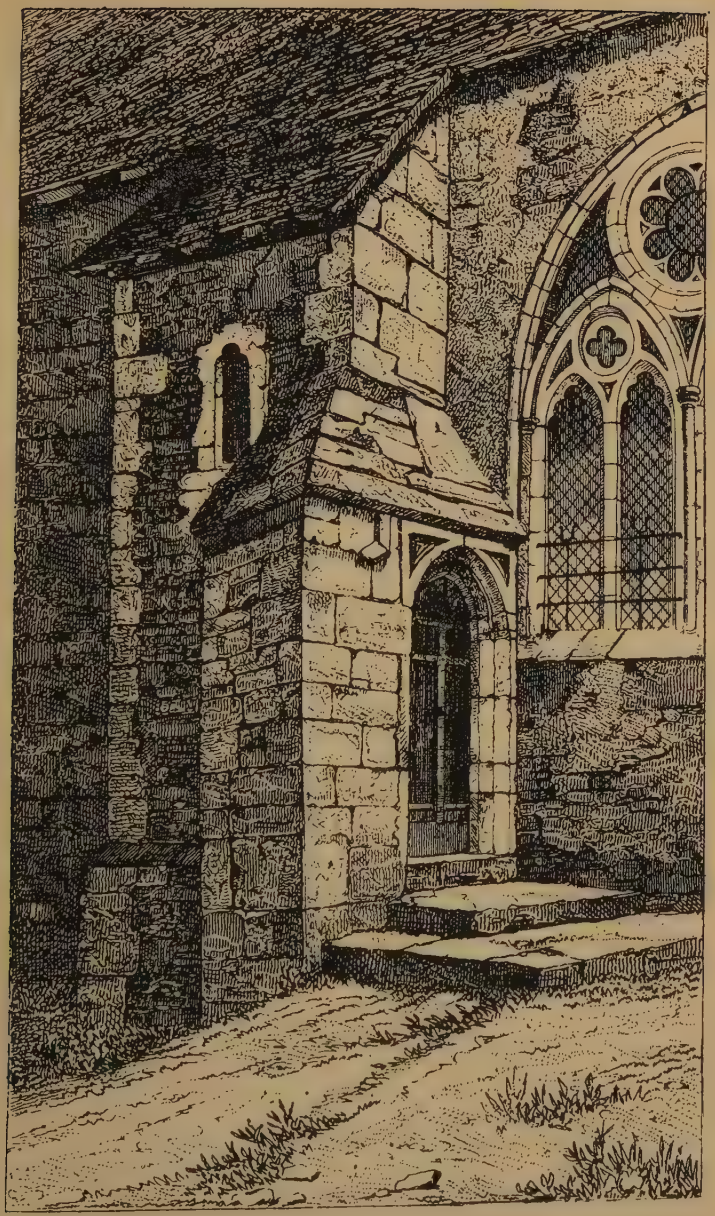
Frequent mention is made in wills of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the desire of testators to beautify the chancels of the churches in which during life they had worshipped. Thus William Graystoke, of Wakefield, left to the church there in 1508 "a cloth of Arras work, sometime hanging in his hall" : £10 "to the stalling of the said church : two pairs of censers, and £20 for new choir books." Another testator, Thomas Wood, of Hull, who had been a draper and sheriff and mayor of his city, on his death bequeathed to Trinity Church

"one of my best beds of Arreys work, upon condition that after my decease I will that the said bed shall yearly cover my grave at my *Dirge* and *Masse*, done in the said Trinity Church with note for evermore ; and also I will that the same bed be hung yearly in the said church at the feast of St. George the Martyr, among the other worshipfulle beds ; and when the said beds be taken down and delivered, then I will that the same bed be re-delivered into the vestry and there to remain with my cope of gold."

Another testator, in 1504, this time a priest, and the rector of Lowthorpe in Yorkshire, leaves to the church of

Catton a bed-cover with big figures on it, to lie before the high altar on the chief feasts; and another bed-cover with the figure of a lion, to lie before the high altar of Lowthorpe, on all the great festivals.

In some instances legacies are left to beautify the existing altar, to have paintings made for it, or images carved upon it. In one case a man leaves a notable sum for those days to have two paintings executed abroad to adorn the chancel. A very curious bequest was made to the church of Holy Trinity, Hull, in 1502, by Thomas Golsman, an alderman of the city. "I leave," he says, "£10 in honour of the Sacrament, to make at the high altar angels to descend and ascend to the roof of the church at the Elevation of the Body and Blood of Christ, as they have at Lynne;" that is, the angels descend until the end of the singing of the *Ne nos inducas in tentationem* of the *Pater noster*, when they ascend. The chancel was very frequently, if not generally in England, divided from the nave by the rood with its screen. The *rood*, meaning a gallows, or cross or crucifix, probably consisted originally of the crucifix, which stood over the entrance into the choir, while the screen was the developed low walls which shut in the chancel, in or on which on either side were the pulpits or ambos, from which the Epistle and Gospel were chanted in solemn masses. The "rood-beam," or "rood-screen," or "rood-loft," was probably the introduction of the twelfth century. In its simplest form of a "beam," the rood supported a great crucifix, which was often in the wills of the fifteenth century and other documents called the *Summus Crucifix;* and generally the two figures of the Blessed Virgin and St. John were represented as standing at the foot of the cross, in



OUTSIDE ENTRANCE TO ROOD-LOFT, ST. JOHN'S, WINCHESTER

reference to John xix. 26. Besides this, lights were frequently placed upon the beam, and Ducange, under the word *Trabes*, gives an example of a mediæval writer who mentions fifty candles as placed on the "rood-beam." In the form of its highest development the rood took the shape of "the Screen" as seen in many of our English cathedrals, or in French churches under the name of *Jubé*. In parish churches in England it was usually called a "rood-loft," and took the shape of a light screen, generally of wood, supporting a wooden gallery, on which was the great crucifix, etc., and to which access was obtained by a flight of steps, often in one of the piers of the chancel arch and entered by a door generally from within the church, but certainly sometimes from without.

The work of carving and ornamenting the rood-lofts in the parish churches was constant up to the very eve of the Reformation, and bequests are very frequently met with in the wills of that period for this end, and to keep up the rood-lights. At St. Mary-at-Hill, for instance, in 1496–7 there are a set of accounts headed "costes paid for the pyntyng of the Roode, with karvyng and odir costes also"; and amongst the items is "to the karvare for makyng of 3 dyadems—and for mendyng the Roode, the cross, the Mary and John, the crowne of thorn, with all other fawtes, *Summa* 10 shillings"; and yet another item was for the painting and gilding. Towards these and other expenses of "setlyng up of the Roode" the parishioners contributed in a special collection. The legacy for beautifying and completing the rood at Leverton has already been noticed. To the "Rood" in one parish church a lady in her will leaves "my heart of gold

SCREEN, WITHYCOMBE, SOMERSET

with a diamond in the midst." In 1510, at St. Margaret's, Westminster, £10 was left "towards making a new rood-loft"; and the work was still apparently going on in 1516, when another donor left £38 for the same object. Lastly, in the churchwardens' accounts of St. Edmund's, Salisbury, there are entered expenses for the light kept burning before the rood; at which place, for example, in 1480 the candle-maker was specially employed in making "the rood-light." A curious entry in the accounts of the parish church of St. Petrock's, Exeter, shows how this light at the rood was kept up: "Ordinans made by the eight men for gathering to the wax silver for the light kept before the high cross, which says, that every man and his wife to the wax shall pay yerely one peny, and every hired servant that takes wages a half peny, and every other persons at Easter, taking no wages, a farthing." In some places, as, for example, Cratfield, there was a "rowell," or wheel or corona of candles, kept burning on feast-days before the rood.

The special destruction of the roods of the English churches in the early stages of the Reformation under Edward VI., and again under Elizabeth, causes many to think that the reverence shown to this representation of our Crucified Lord, probably the most prominent object visible in the churches, was not only excessive, but mistaken in its kind. If that were so, it must at least be allowed that the Church's teaching on the matter was clear and definite. The author of *Dives and Pauper*, for example, says that the representations of the Crucified Christ—

"ben ordeyned to steryn men's mynds to thinke on Crist's Incarnation and on hys passyon and on his levyng . . . for oft man is

more stirred be sight than be herying or redying—also thei ben ordeyned to ben a tokne and a boke to the lewyd people that thei mon redyn in ymagery and peyntour that clerkes redyn in boke."

Then, after describing what thoughts the sight of the crucifix should bring to the mind of the beholder, *Pauper* goes on—

"In this manner I pray thee read thy boke and fall down to the ground and thank thy God that would do so much for thee, and worship him above all things—not the stock, stone nor tree, but him that died on the tree for thy sin and thy sake: so that thou kneel if thou wilt afore the image, not to the image; do thy worship afore the image, afore the thing, not to the thing; make thy prayer afore the thing, not to the thing, for it seeth thee not, heareth thee not, understandeth thee not. Make thy offering if thou wilt afore the thing, but not to the thing, make thy pilgrimage not to the thing nor for the thing, for it may not help thee, but to him and for him that the thing representeth. For if thou do it for the thing or to the thing thou doest idolatry."

We now pass from the chancel to the body of the church. The nave and aisles—if there were any—were in a special way under the care of the wardens chosen by the people. There seems to be little doubt that very generally, although perhaps not universally, the walls of the parish churches were painted with subjects illustrating Bible history, the lives of the saints, or the teaching of the sacramental doctrine of the Church. In the same way, although of course in a lesser degree, the windows were often filled with glass stained with pictures conveying the same lessons to the young and the unlettered. These were, as they were called, "the books of the poor and the illiterate," who, by looking at these

representations, could learn the story of God's dealings with mankind, and could draw encouragement to strive manfully in God's service, from the example of the deeds of God's chosen servants.

The work of beautifying the parish churches by wall decorations and painted windows was the delight of the parishioners themselves, for it all helped to make their churches objects both of beauty and interest. To take but one example: the church of St. Neots possesses many stained-glass windows, placed in their present positions between 1480 and 1530. The inscriptions inserted below the lights testify that most of them were paid for by individual members of the parish, but in the case of three it appears that groups of people joined together to beautify their church. Thus, a Latin label below one says that "the youths of the parish of St. Neots" erected the window in 1528; a second says that, the following year, the young maidens emulated the example of their brothers; and the "mothers" of the parish finished the third window in 1530.

Besides the high altar in the chancel, there were, from early times, few churches that did not have one or more, and sometimes many smaller or side altars. These were dedicated to various saints, and from the fifteenth century, and even earlier, they were used as chantries or guild chapels. The priests serving them were supported by the annuity left by some deceased benefactor to the parish church, or by a stipend paid by the guild to the priest who acted as its chaplain, or again by the private generosity of some benefactor. These chapels were frequently richly decorated, furnished with hangings, and supplied with their own vestments and altar furniture

by their founders or by the guilds that supported them. To take an example: In 1471 an indenture or agreement was made between Mr. William Vowelle, master of the town of Wells, and the two wardens of our Lady's altar in St. Cuthbert's Church, and John Stowell, freemason, for making the front of the Jesse at the said altar. The work was to cost £40 (probably more than £500 of our money), and the mason was to be paid 40s. a week, with £5 to be kept in hand till the completion of the work. To take another example: at Heydon, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, the south aisle was dedicated to St. Catherine, and there is an item of expense in the churchwardens' accounts showing the existence of a painted altar, an image of the saint, and a kneeling-desk in front of it.

In the accounts of St. Mary-at-Hill, where there were many such side chapels, there is an order of the wardens, made in 1518, "that every priest shall sing with his founder's vestments, and that their chest is to be at the altar's end, next where they sing." In some of these small chapels there were statues, before which lights were kept burning by the devotion of various members, or groups of members, of a parish. Thus at Henley-on-Thames there were seven chapels and two altars in the nave, besides the high altar in the chancel. Lights were kept burning before the rood, the altar of Jesus, and the altar of the Holy Trinity. In 1482 the warden and the commonalty ordained that the chaplain in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary say Mass every day at six o'clock, and the chantry priest of St. Katherine's chapel at eight o'clock. In these accounts are entered the receipts and expenses of the Guild of the Holy Name, and

amongst the rest is an entry "for painting the image of Jesus and gilding it." The most curious entry, however, in this book of accounts is that of a gift to secure the perpetual maintenance of "our Lady's light." This was a set of jewels, given to the churchwardens in 1518 by Lady Jones. They were apparently very fine, and were to be let out by the wardens for the use of brides at weddings. The sum charged for the hire was to be 3*s.* 4*d.* for anyone outside the town, and 20*d.* for any burgess of Henley. Portions of what is called "the Bridegeer" were let at lower figures; but in one year the wardens received as much as 46*s.* 6*d.* from this source of income. At the Reformation the jewels were sold for £10 6*s.* 8*d.*

CORONA OF LIGHTS, ST. MARTIN DE TROYES—FIFTEENTH CENTURY

The floors of our churches, until late in the fifteenth century, were not generally so encumbered with pews or sittings, as they became later on, but were open spaces covered with rushes. The church accounts show regular expenses for straw, rushes, or, on certain festivals, box and other green stuff wherewith to cover the pavement. This carpet was renewed two or three times a year, and one almost shudders to think of the state of unpleasant dirt revealed on those periodical cleanings. Some accounts show regular payments made to "the Raker" on these occasions, whilst the purchase,

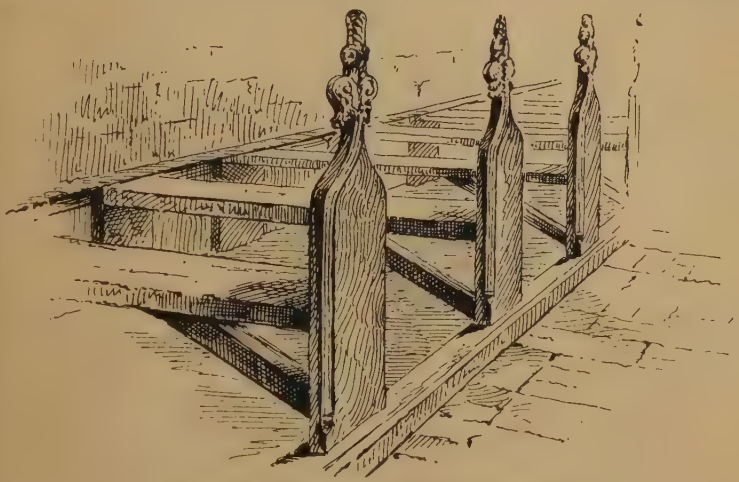
in 1469, of "three rat-traps" for the church of St. Michael's, Cornhill, suggests that the rush covering must have been a happy hunting-ground for rats, mice, and suchlike vermin. In some places, however, mats were provided by the wardens, as at St. Margaret's, Westminster, where, in 1538, 4*s.* 4*d.* was paid to provide "matts for the parishioners to kneel on when they reverenced their Maker." So too, at St. Mary-at-Hill, London, there was a mat in the confession pew, and others were provided for the choristers, whilst we read of the expenditure of 4*d.* "for three mats of wikirs, boght for prestis and clerkis."

The provision of fixed seats in parish churches, for the use of the people generally, was a late introduction. The practice of allowing seats to be appropriated to individuals was in early days distinctly discouraged. In 1287, for instance, Bishop Quevil, of Exeter, in his synodical Constitutions, condemns the practice altogether.

"We have heard," he says, "that many quarrels have arisen amongst members of the same parish, two or three of whom have laid claim to one seat. For the future, no one is to claim any sitting in the church as his own, with the exception of noble people and the patrons of churches. Whoever first comes to church to pray, let him take what place he wishes in which to pray."

This, of course, refers to a few seats or benches, and not to regular sittings or pews, which were begun to be set up in the English churches only in the middle of the fifteenth century, and in some not till late in the sixteenth. At Bramley church, for example, the wardens did not begin "to seat" the nave before 1538; at Folkestone some pews were

in existence as early as in 1489; in 1477–8 the wardens of St. Edmund's parish church, Salisbury, assigned certain seats to individuals at a yearly rent of 6*d.*; and even before that time, in 1455, seats were rented at St. Ewen's church, Bristol. Apparently, once introduced, the churchwardens soon found out the advantages of being able to derive income from the pew or seat rents, especially as from some of the accounts

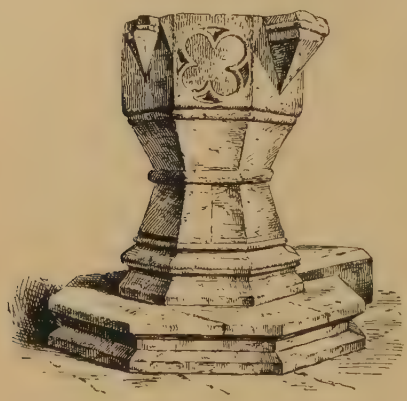


BACKLESS BENCHES, CAWSTON, NORFOLK

it is evident that the seats were first made with money obtained at special collections for the purpose, as at St. Mary's the Great, Cambridge, in 1518. In the first instance, apparently, the seats were assigned only to the women-folk, but the great convenience was, no doubt, quickly realised by all, and the use became general after a very short time.

One of the most conspicuous objects in every parish church was its *Font*. This stood at the west end of the church, and frequently in a place set apart as a baptistery.

From the thirteenth century it was ordered, in the Constitutions of St. Edmund of Canterbury, that every font must be made of stone or some other durable material, and that it was to be covered and locked, so as to keep the baptismal water pure, and prevent any one except the priest from meddling with what had been consecrated on Easter Eve with Holy Oils and with solemn ceremony. Great care was enjoined on the clergy to keep the Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Oils, and the baptismal water safe under lock and key. For, says the gloss on this ordinance in Lyndwood, keys exist so that things may be kept securely; and he that is negligent about the keys would appear to be negligent about what the keys are supposed to guard.

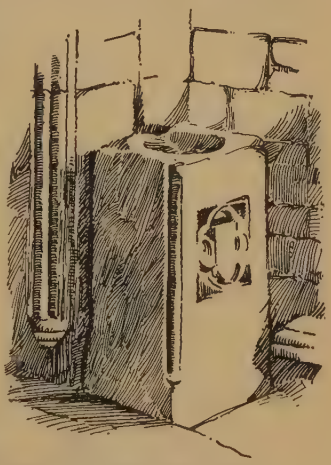


FONT, ST. MICHAEL'S, SUTTON BONNINGTON, NOTTS

By the ordinary law of the Church a font could only be set up in a parish church; and in the case of chapels of ease, and other places in a parochial district, where it was lawful to satisfy other ecclesiastical obligations, for baptism the child had generally to be brought to the mother church. The instances in which permission was granted for the erection of any font in a chapel are very rare, and leave was never given without the consent of the rector of the parish church. Thus a grant was made in the fourteenth century to Lord Beauchamp to erect a font for baptisms in his chapel at

Beauchamp, provided that the rector agreed that it would not harm his parochial rights.

Leading into the church very generally there was a covered approach, greater or less in size, called the porch, from the Latin *porta*, "a door or gate." This was usually at the south side of the church, and sometimes it was built in two stories, the upper one being used as a priest's chamber, with a window looking into the church. In some cases this chamber was used as a safe repository for the parish property and muniments. In the lower porch, at the side of the church door, was the stoup, usually in a stone niche, with a basin to contain the Holy Water. With this people were taught to cross themselves before entering God's house, the water being a symbol of the purity of soul with which they ought to approach the place where His Majesty dwelt. The mutilated remains of those niches, destroyed when the practice was forbidden in the sixteenth century, may still frequently be seen in the porches of pre-Reformation churches. Sometimes it would seem that there was attached to the water stoup a sprinkler to be used for the Blessed Water—as, for example, at Wigtoft, a village church near Boston, in Lincolnshire, where the churchwardens purchased "a chain of iron with a Holy Water stick at the south door."



HOLY WATER STOUP, WOOTTON COURTNEY, SOMERSET

The land round about the church was also in the custody of the people's wardens. It was called the *Cemetery*, from the word *cœmeterium*, "a dormitory," it being in the Christian sense the sleeping-place of the dead who had died in the Lord. It was likewise spoken of as the "church-yard," or under the still more happy appellation of "God's acre." From an early period attempts were made from time to time to put a stop to the practice of holding fairs in the cemetery, or to prevent anything being sold in the porches of churches or in the precincts. Bishops prohibited the practice by Constitutions, and imposed all manner of spiritual penalties for disobedience. By the Synod of Exeter, in 1267, Bishop Quevil ordered that all the cemeteries in his diocese should be enclosed securely, and that no animal was to be allowed pasturage on the grass that grew in them, and even the clergy were warned of the impropriety of permitting their cattle to graze in "the holy places, which both civil and canon law ordered to be respected." For this reason, the bishop continues, "all church cemeteries must be guarded from all defilement, both because they are holy (in themselves) and because they are made holy by the relics of the Saints."

The reason for this belief in the holy character of cemeteries is set out clearly in a letter of Bishop Edyndon, in 1348, where he says that

> "the Catholic Church spread over the world believes in the resurrection of the bodies of the dead. These have been sanctified by the reception of the Sacraments, and are consequently buried, not in profane places, but in specially enclosed and consecrated cemeteries, or in churches, where with due reverence they are kept, like the relics of the Saints, till the day of the resurrection."

The trees that grew within the precincts of the cemetery were at times a fertile cause of dispute between the priest and his people. Were they the property of the parson or of the parish? And could they be cut down at the will of either? In the thirteenth century, when the charge of looking after the churchyards was regarded as weighing chiefly on the clergy, it was considered that to repair the church—either chancel or nave—the trees growing in them might be cut. Otherwise, as they had been planted for the purpose of protecting the churches from damage by gales, they were to be left to grow and carry out the end for which they had been placed there. Archbishop Peckham had previously laid down the law that, although the duty of keeping the enclosure of the cemetery rested upon the parishioners, what grew upon holy ground being holy, the clergy had the right to regard the grass and trees and all that grew in the cemetery as rightly belonging to them. In cutting anything, however, the archbishop warned the clergy to remember that these things were intended to ornament and protect God's house, and that nothing should be cut without reason. However the question of the ownership of the trees growing in churchyards may have been regarded by the parishioners, there are evidences to show that they did not hesitate to adorn their burial-places with trees and shrubs when needed. At St. Mary's, Stutterton, for instance, in 1487, the churchwardens purchased seven score of plants from one John Folle, of Kyrton, and paid for "expenses of settyng of ye plants, 16*d*."

The sacred character of consecrated cemeteries was recognized by the law. Bracton says that "they are free and

absolute from all subjection, as a sacred thing, which is only amongst the goods of God—whatever is dedicated and consecrated to God with rites and by the pontiffs, never to return afterward to any private uses." And amongst these he names "cemeteries dedicated, whether the dead are buried therein or not, because if those places have once been dedicated and consecrated to God, they ought not to be converted again to human uses." Indeed, "even if the dead are buried there without the place having been dedicated or consecrated, it will still be a sacred place."

The ceremony by which the mediæval churchyard was consecrated was performed by the bishop of the diocese, or some other bishop, by his authority and in his name. The fees were to be paid by the parish; and the parochial accounts give examples of this expense having been borne by the wardens. Thus at Yatton, in 1486, the churchyard was greatly enlarged, and, when the new wall had been constructed, the bishop came over and consecrated the ground. The parish entertained him and his ministers at dinner, and paid the episcopal fee, which was 33*s.* 4*d.* One of the expenses of this ceremony, noted down by the churchwardens, was, "We paid the old friar that was come to sing for the parish, 8*d.*"

In the churchyards thus dedicated to God were set up stone crosses or crucifixes, as a testimony to the faith and the hope in the merits of Christ's death, of those who lay there waiting for the resurrection. The utmost reverence for these sacred places was ever enjoined upon all. Children, according to Myrc, were to be well instructed on this point—

"Also wyth-ynn chyrche and seyntwary
Do rygt thus as I the say.
Songe and cry and such fare
For to stynt thou schalt not spare;
Castynge of axtre and eke of ston
Sofere hem there to use non;
Bal and bares and such play
Out of chyrcheyorde put away."

And the penitent soul was to inquire of itself whether it had done its duty in ever offering a prayer for the dead when passing through a cemetery—

"Hast thou I-come by chyrcheyorde
And for ye dead I-prayed no worde?"

In concluding this brief survey of the material parts of pre-Reformation churches, it is impossible not mentally to contrast the picture of these sacred places, as revealed in the warden's accounts, the church inventories and other documents, with the bare and unfurnished buildings they became after what Dr. Jessopp has called "the great pillage." Even the poorest and most secluded village sanctuary was in the early times overflowing with wealth and objects of beauty, which loving hands had gathered to adorn God's house, and to make it, as far as their means would allow, the brightest spot in their little world, and beyond doubt the pride of all their simple, true hearts. This is no picture of our imagination, but sober reality, for the details can be all pieced together from the records which survive. Just as a shattered stained-glass window may with care be put together again, and may help us to understand something of what it must have been in the glory of its completeness, so the fragments of the story of the past, which can be gathered

together after the destruction and decay of the past centuries, are capable of giving some true, though perhaps poor, idea of the town and village parish churches in pre-Reformation days. "There is not a parish church in the Kingdom," writes a Venetian traveller of England in 1500,—"there is not a parish church in the Kingdom so mean as not to possess crucifixes, candlesticks, censers, patens, and cups of silver." What is most remarkable about the documents that have come down to us, and which are mere chance survivals amid the general wreck, is the consistent story they tell of the universal and intelligent interest taken by the people of every parish as a whole in beautifying and supporting their churches. In a real and true sense, which may be perhaps strange to us in these later times, the parish church was *their* church. Their life, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, really centred round it, and they one and all were intimately connected with its management. The building was their care and their pride; the articles of furniture and plate, the vestments and banners and hangings, all had their own well-remembered story, and were regarded, as in truth they were, as the property of every man, woman, and child of the particular village or district.

CHAPTER IV

THE PARISH CLERGY

THE head of every parish in pre-Reformation days was the priest. He might be a *rector* or *vicar*, according to his position in regard to the benefice: but in either case he was the resident ecclesiastical head of the parochial district. The word "parson," in the sense of a dignified personage—"the person of the place"—was, in certain foreign countries, applied in the eleventh century, in its Latin form of *persona*, to any one holding the parochial cure of souls. English legal writers, such as Coke and Blackstone, have stated the civil law signification of the word as that of any "person" by whom the property of God, the Patron Saint, the church or parish was held, and who could sue or be sued at law in respect to this property. In ecclesiastical language, at any rate in England, according to Lyndwood, the word "parson" was synonymous with "rector."

Besides the rector or parson and the vicar, several other classes of clergy were frequently to be met with in mediæval parishes. Such were curates, chantry priests, chaplains, stipendiary priests, and sometimes even deacons and sub-deacons. About each of these and their duties and obligations

it will be necessary to speak in turn, but before doing so something may usefully be said about the clergy generally, and about their education, obligations, and method of life. From the earliest times the clerical profession was open to all ranks and classes of the people. Possibly, and even probably, the English landlords of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries were only too glad to bestow livings, of which they had the right of presentation, upon younger sons or relations, who had been educated with this end in view. But in those same centuries there is ample evidence that the ranks of the clergy were recruited from the middle classes, and even from the sons of serfs, who had to obtain their overlord's leave and pay a fine to him for putting their children to school, and thus taking them from the land to which they were by birth *adscripti*, or bound. Mr. Thorold Rogers has given instances of the exaction of these fines for sending sons to school. In one example 13*s.* 4*d.* was paid for leave to put an eldest son *ad scholas* with a view of his taking orders; in another 5*s.* was paid, in 1335, for a similar permission for a younger son. In the diocesan registers, also, episcopal dispensations *de defectu natalium* are frequent, and show that a not inconsiderable number of the English clergy sprang from the class of "natives" of the soil, or serfs, upon whom the lord of the manor had a claim. Examples also could be given of a bishop allowing his "native" (*nativus meus*) permission to take sacred orders and to hold ecclesiastical benefices—acts of kindness on the bishops' part shown to some promising son of one of the serfs of the episcopal domains.

The practice of introducing into the body of the clergy

even those sprung from the lower ranks of life was not altogether popular, and the author of *The Vision of Piers Plowman* has left a record of the existing prejudice on the subject. He thinks that "bondmen and beggars' children belong to labour, and should serve lords' sons," and that things are much amiss when every cobbler sends "his son to schole" and "each beggar's brat" learns his book, "so that beggar's brat a Bishop that worthen among the peers of the land prese to sytten . . . and his sire a sowter (cobbler) y-soiled with grees, his teeth with toyling of leather battered as a saw."

In 1406 the more liberal spirit of encouraging learning wherever it was found to exist asserted itself, and by a statute of the English Parliament of that date it was enacted that "every man or woman, of what state or condition he be, shall be free to set their son or daughter to take learning at any school that pleaseth them within the realm." That such schools existed in the past in greater numbers than has been thought likely does not now appear open to doubt. Besides the teaching to be obtained at the cathedrals, religious houses, and well-known grammar schools, the foundations of education were furnished by numerous other smaller places, taught by priests up and down the country. This is proved by the numbers of students who came up to the Universities for their higher work at the age of fourteen or so, after they had been prepared elsewhere, and the numbers of whom fell off almost to a vanishing point on the destruction of the religious houses, and the demolition of the smaller schools, under cover of the Act for dissolving Chantries, etc. In the Chantry certificates

mention is made of numerous parochial schools taught by priests, who also served the parish in other ways, or by clerks supported by money left for the purpose of giving free education. These proofs appear on the face of the certificates, in order that a plea might be made for their exemption from the operation of the general dissolution of chantries and guilds; it is needless to add that the plea had no effect. In some places, too, as for example at Morpeth and Alnwick and Durham, a second school of music, called the "song school," was kept. At the latter place a chantry was founded in the cathedral for two priests "to pray and to keep free schools, one of grammar and one of song, in the city of Durham, for all manner of children that should repair to the said schools, and also to distribute yearly alms to poor people." At Lavenham, in Suffolk, a priest was paid by the parish to "teach the children of the town" and to act as "secondary" to the curate.

By the will of Archbishop Rotheram, in 1500, the foundation of a college in his native place was laid. In this will the archbishop, after saying that he had been born at Rotheram, gives an interesting biographical note about his early years—

"To this place a teacher of grammar coming, by what chance, but I believe it was God's grace that brought him thither, taught me and other youths, by which others with me attained to higher (paths of life). Wherefore wishing to show my gratitude to our Saviour, and to celebrate the cause of my (success in life), and lest I should seem to be ungrateful and forgetful of God's benefits and from whence I came, I have determined in the first place to establish there a teacher of grammar to instruct all without charge."

Archbishop Rotheram's case was not singular. Bishop Latimer, in one of his sermons before Edward VI., gives an account of his early life.

"My father," he says, "was a yeoman, and had no lands of his own; only he had a farm of three or four pounds by the year at the uttermost, and hereupon he tilled so much as kept half a dozen men. He had a walk for a hundred sheep, and my mother milked thirty kine. He was able and did find the king a harness and his horse. I remember that I buckled on his harness when he went to Blackheath field. He kept me to school, or else I had not been able to have preached before the King's majesty now."

An ordinance of the diocese of Exeter in the synod of Bishop Quevil seems also to suggest that schools of some kind existed in most cities and towns. He had always understood, he says, that the benefice of the "Holy Water bearer" was in the beginning instituted in order to give poor clerks something to help them to school, "that they might become more fit and prepared for higher posts." In this belief the bishop directs that in all churches, not more than ten miles distant from the schools of the cities and towns of his diocese, the "benefices" of the "Holy Water bearers" should always be held by scholars.

Seager's *Schoole of Virtue*, although written in Queen Mary's reign, refers, no doubt, to a previous state of things. The author seems to take for granted that attendance at school is a very common, if not the ordinary thing, and that it is in the power of most youths to make their future by study and perseverance.

"Experience doth teche, and shewe to the playne
That many to honour, by learninge attayne

That were of byrthe but simple and bace
Such is the goodness of God's speciale grace.
For he that to honour by vertue doth ryse
Is doubly happy, and counted more wyse."

The writer then warns the boys he is addressing to behave themselves when leaving school. On their way home they would do well to walk two and two, and "not in heaps, like a swarm of bees." Another educator, Old Symon, in his "Lesson of Wysedom for all maner chyldryn," urges diligence and plodding upon his pupils, with a jest as to possible positions to which the student may in time attain.

"And lerne as faste as thou can,
For our byshop is an old man,
And therfor thou must lerne faste
If thou wilt be byshop when he is past."

It is unnecessary to pursue the subject of the education of the parochial clergy further. After his elementary education had been received in the schools, the student's preparation for the reception of Orders was continued and completed at the Universities. The ordinary course here was lengthy. Grammar, which included Latin and literature with rhetoric and logic, occupied four years. The student was then admitted a Bachelor. In the case of clerical students this was followed by seven years' training before the Bachelor's degree in Theology was bestowed, and only after a further three years' study of the Bible, and after the candidate had lectured at least on some one book of the Scriptures, was he considered to have earned his degree of Doctor in Theology.

The age when the candidate for Orders could be promoted to the various steps leading to the priesthood was settled by

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SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

law and custom. A boy of seven, if he showed signs of having a vocation to the sacred ministry, might be made a cleric by receiving the tonsure. In "rare instances" and under special circumstances he might then receive an ecclesiastical benefice, and so get the wherewith to live while he was studying to fulfil the duties attached to his office. In the course of the next seven years the youth could be given the minor Orders of "doorkeeper," "lector," "exorcist," and "acolyte." He would then be at least fourteen years of age, and thus at the time of life at which in those days students were supposed to begin their University course. At eighteen the candidate to the priesthood might be ordained Subdeacon; at twenty he could take the diaconate, and at twenty-five be ordained Priest. It will be noticed that these ages in some way generally correspond to the academic degrees. Going to the University at fourteen, a clerical student might have, and no doubt frequently had, received the various steps of minor Orders. Four years of the liberal arts enabled him at eighteen to take his degree of Bachelor of Arts. It was at this age that he could be ordained Subdeacon. Then seven years of theological study enabled him to become a Bachelor of Divinity at twenty-five, at which time he was of the right age to receive the priesthood. This was the regular course; but without doubt the greater number of candidates for the ministry did not pass through all the schools. Some, no doubt, after entering sacred Orders, became attached to cathedrals, colleges of priests, and even parochial churches, where, in the midst of a more or less active life, they prepared themselves for further ecclesiastical advancement. Wherever

they were, however, they would have to prove themselves to be sufficiently lettered and of good life before they would be accepted for Ordination, and their examination and proof was put as a conscientious duty upon the bishop before he determined upon accepting and ordaining them. For a candidate to become a cleric there was not much difficulty, if he showed sufficient diligence and good-will, and the various minor Orders were also bestowed without any serious question as to the likelihood of failure, etc., in the ecclesiastical career. With the subdiaconate, however, this was in no sense the case, and no one was allowed to be ordained without what was called a "title," that is, he was required to show that he had been nominated to a benefice sufficient for his proper maintenance, or had been given a responsible guarantee of adequate support for one in sacred Orders. In the case of sons of well-to-do parents the bishop might accept the possession of sufficient property as guarantee under the title of "patrimony." Moreover, the Episcopal Registers show for what large numbers of clergy the religious houses became surety for a fitting maintenance in the event of failure of health or withdrawal of ecclesiastical resources. A certificate of Orders received was to be furnished by the bishop's official, the fee for each of which was settled in the English Church by Archbishop Stratford at *6d.*

The entry into the clerical state, with its duties and privileges, was outwardly manifested by the tonsure and *corona.* The former, as the gloss upon the Constitution of Cardinal Otho declares, was the shaving of a circle on the crown of the cleric as a sign of the laying aside all desire for temporal advantages and avaricious thoughts. "And," says

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the author, "in the proper tonsure of clerics, I believe, is included the shaving of beards, which, contrary to the law, many modern clerks grow with great care." The *corona*, although apparently in time it became synonymous with the "tonsure," in its original English meaning certainly signified the close crop of the hair, on the upper part of the head, as "a sign that clerics sought only the Kingdom of God." One curious instance of a bishop giving the tonsure in a parish church may be mentioned. In 1336, Bishop Grandisson, of Exeter, went to St. Buryan to terminate a serious quarrel between the inhabitants and himself, in which they had practically rejected his jurisdiction. He was attended by many of the gentry and the clergy, one of whom translated the bishop's address into Cornish, for those who only understood that language. The parish then renewed their obedience "in English, French, and Cornish," and the bishop absolved them from the penalties of their disobedience. After which, says the record, "he gave the first tonsure, or sign of the clerical character, to many who were natives of that parish."

The dress of clerics was legislated for by the Constitutions of Cardinal Ottoboni, to which subsequent reference was constantly made by the English bishops. Thus the same Bishop Grandisson, in 1342, issued a monition to his clergy on the subject, in which he speaks of the sensible legislation of the cardinal. All clerics were directed to follow this law as to their dress; it was not to be so long or so short as to be an object of ridicule or remark. The cassock or clerical coat in length was to be well above the ankles (*ultra tibiarum medium attingentes*), and the hair was to be cut so that it could not be parted and showed the ears plainly. In this

way, by their *corona* and tonsure, and by the exterior form of their dress, they might be clearly known and distinguished from laymen. Cardinal Otho likewise enforced the regulation about clerical dress, and declared that some of the English clergy looked rather like soldiers than priests, an opinion which the author of the gloss endorsed with the saying that it is not only in their dress that some offend, but in their open-mouthed laugh (*risus dentium*) and their general gait. The cardinal directs that all clerics shall use their outer dress closed, and not open like a cloak, and this in particular in churches, in meetings of the clergy, and by all parish priests, always and everywhere in their parishes.

The status of the English clergy, generally from a legal standpoint, is thus described in Pollock and Maitland's *History of English Law*—

"Taken individually, every ordained clerk has as such a peculiar legal status; he is subject to special rules of ecclesiastical law and to special rules of temporal law. . . . Every layman, unless he were a Jew, was subject to ecclesiastical law; it regulated many affairs of his life, marriages, divorces, testaments, intestate succession; it would try him and punish him for various offences, for adultery, fornication, defamation; it would constrain him to pay tithes and other similar dues; in the last resort it could excommunicate him, and then the State would come to its aid. . . . The ordained clerk was within many rules of ecclesiastical law which did not affect the layman, and it had a tighter hold over him, since it could suspend him from office, deprive him of benefice, and degrade him from his Orders."

So much about the clergy generally and about the way in which they entered the clerical state and mounted the various steps of the minor and sacred Orders, until their

reception of the sacred priesthood brought them into the close relations which existed between the clergyman and his flock. It is now time to turn to the consideration of the various kinds of parochial clergy. And first (1) The *Rector* or *Parson* was appointed to his benefice by the patron of the living, with the approval of the bishop, by whose order he was also inducted or instituted. Among the *Harleian Charters* in the British Museum is an original deed of induction to a living, which sets out the ceremony and prescribes the feast to follow. The benefice after his induction became the rector's freehold. In the language of Bracton, the position of a rector differed legally from that of a vicar, inasmuch as he could sue and be sued for the property or benefice he held, which he did in the name of the Church. And to this "only rectors of parochial churches are entitled, who have been instituted as parsons by bishops and by ordinaries." It was the duty of the archdeacon, either personally or by his official, on the certificate of the bishop, to put the rector into possession of his benefice. The fee to be paid, according to the Constitution of Archbishop Stratford, was not to exceed 40*d.* when the archdeacon came in person, "which sum is sufficient for the expenses of four persons and their horses;" or two shillings when the official came with two or three horses.

Previously to this, however, and before issuing his letters of induction, the bishop was bound to satisfy himself that the priest presented to fill the rectory had the necessary qualities of a good pastor of souls. In the Constitution of Cardinal Otho on this point, after recalling the saying of St. Gregory that "the guidance of souls is the art of arts," the cardinal

goes on to say that "our Catholic art" requires that there "should be one priest in one church," and that he should be a fitting teacher, "by his holy life, his learning, and his teaching," and upon this last quality Lyndwood notes that he should be able to adapt his instructions to his audience. "Whilst to the wise and learned he may speak of high and profound things, to the simple and those of lesser mental capacity he should preach plainly about few things, and those that are useful." As to these qualifications the bishop had to satisfy himself within two months after the presentation, in order that the parish should not be kept vacant longer than was necessary. Besides the above-named qualities, by ordinary law of the English Church, any one presented as a rector was bound to be a cleric; to be at least five and twenty years old; to be commendable in his life and knowledge; and if not a priest, he was at least to be fit to receive the priesthood within a year. As a rule each rectory, or benefice for a rector, had but a single rector; but there are instances where in one place, at Leverton, for example, there were two parsons appointed to one church, with two houses, with the tithes divided, and, of course, with the obligations distinct. In a few cases, as at Darley Dale, Derbyshire, there were three or even more rectors for the one parish.

In the first chapter it has been pointed out what were the tithes payable to the rector of a parish, and that they frequently brought in a considerable sum of money. On the other hand, there were many and constant claims made upon the revenues of the parochial church, and this not accidentally or casually, but by custom and almost by law. The repair

of the chancel and the upkeep of choir-books and other things necessary for the services, which were not found by the people, had to be met out of the "fourth part" of the tithe, which was supposed to be devoted to such purposes. Another constant claim was the relief of the poor, strangers, and wayfarers, called "hospitality." This, according to Lyndwood, was well understood and practised in England, where the churches, to meet those calls, were better endowed than they were abroad.

This claim, there can be no doubt, was fully accepted and carried out. If a rector was for some reason or other non-resident, by law his charity or "hospitality" had to be administered either by the curate who served the church, or by a resident proctor appointed for the purpose. In acknowledgment of this obligation, in the wills of the period we find the clergy directing money to be paid by their executors to the poor of the parishes which they had served. Thus William Sheffield, Dean of York, who died in 1496, after arranging that this distribution should be made in proportion to the time during which he had held each benefice, adds: "For the goods of the Church are the property of the poor, and therefore the conscience is heavily burdened in the spending of the goods of the Church. For badly spending them Jesus have mercy."

In the record of the visitation of churches in the diocese of Exeter, in 1440, there are many references to the "hospitality" kept by the clergy. In one instance the rector is praised for having rebuilt his chancel and added two good rooms to the rectory, one for himself and one for the purposes of hospitality. In another there is a note "that,

from time immemorial to the day of the present rector, great hospitality had been maintained, and the goods of the church had been made the property of the sick and the poor," but that this had ceased. It seems to us, indeed, almost strange in these days to see what was the teaching of the mediæval Church about the claims of the poor, and to remember that this was not the doctrine of some rhetorical and irresponsible preacher, but of such a man of law and order as was the great Canonist Lyndwood. There can be no doubt that the proceeds of ecclesiastical benefices were recognised in the Constitutions of legates and archbishops as being in fact, as well as in theory, the *eleemosynæ*, the *spes pauperum*—the alms and the hope of the poor. Those ecclesiastics who consumed the revenues of their cures on other than necessary and fitting purposes were declared to be "defrauders of the rights of God's poor," and "thieves of Christian alms intended for them;" whilst the English canonists and legal professors, who glossed these provisions of the Church law, gravely discussed the ways in which the poor of a parish could vindicate their right—*right*, they call it—to a share in the ecclesiastical revenues of their Church.

This "jus pauperum," which is set forth in such a text-book of English law as Lyndwood's *Provinciale*, is naturally put forth more clearly and forcibly in a work intended for popular instruction, such as *Dives et Pauper*. "To them that have the benefices and goods of Holy Church," writes the author, "it belonged principally to give alms and to have the cure of poor people." To him who squanders the alms of the altar on luxury and useless show the poor man may justly point and say, "It is ours that you so spend in

pomp and vanity! . . . That thou keepest for thyself of the altar passing the honest needful living, it is raveny, it is theft, it is sacrilege." From the earliest days of English Christianity the care of the helpless poor was regarded as an obligation incumbent on all; and in 1342 Archbishop Stratford, dealing with *appropriations*, or the assignment of ecclesiastical revenue to the support of some religious house or college, ordered that a portion of the tithe should always be set apart for the relief of the poor, because, as Bishop Stubbs has pointed out, in England, from the days of King Ethelred, "a third part of the tithe" which belonged to the Church was the acknowledged birthright of the poorer members of Christ's flock. All the old diocesan registers of English sees afford like instances of specific injunctions as to bestowing part of the income of the benefice on the poor when appropriations were granted.

Besides the regular revenues from parochial tithes, the rector had other sources of income. Such, for instance, were the offerings made for various services rendered to individuals, as baptisms, marriages, churching of women, and funerals. An offering, also, for a special Mass said or sung for a particular person or intention, was made to the rector if he officiated, which by the Constitution of Lambeth he could only do when the special service did not interfere with the regular duties of his cure. In 1259–60 Bishop Bronescombe settled the Mass fee at "one penny;" and in the churchwardens' accounts of Dover there is an entry, in 1536, of a payment "for ten Masses with their offeryng pens, which was for Grace's obit," 4*s.* 4*d.* In law these offerings were known as "memorial pence" (*denarii memoriales*), or

"earnest pence" (*denarii perquisiti*), because, on account of this "retaining fee," the priest engaged to offer Mass on a special day.

Various "oblations," moreover, were apparently made to the parson regularly. At Folkestone, for example, according to the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, an oblation of 5*d.* was made to the priest each Sunday. Lyndwood lays down, as the law regarding regular oblations "made on Sundays and Festivals, etc.," that they belong to the priest who had the cure of souls, "whose duty it was to pray for the sins of the people." Other priests, who might be attached to the church, had no claims upon them except by agreement, as those who make the offering are not their parishioners. Oblations of this kind were not always voluntary, and they could be recovered for the clergyman by the bishop, as, for instance, when they were made according to a previous agreement, or promise, or in any special need of the Church, as when the minister had not sufficient to support himself properly; or when such offering was made according to established custom.

Bishop Quevil, in the Synod of Exeter, states what were the long-established customs in the English Church as to regular oblations. Every adult parishioner above the age of fourteen years had to make an offering four times a year, at Christmas and Easter, on the patronal feast, and on the dedication feast of his parish church, or, according to custom, on All Saints' day. The bishop also desired that the people of his diocese should be persuaded to bring Pentecost offerings also to their parish churches, or at least to send them to their parsons. To induce them so to do, special indulgences granted to all benefactors of churches were to be published

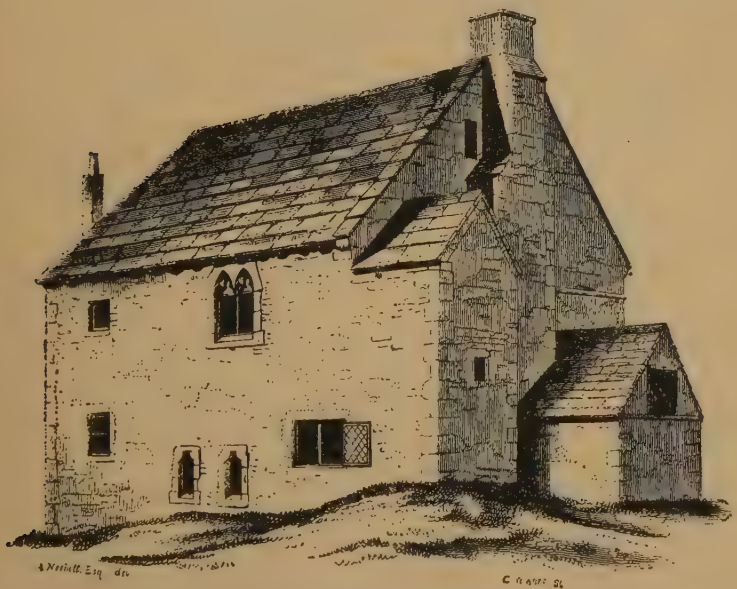
on each of the three Sundays before the feast, and all such offerings were to be taken to the place where the Whit-Sunday processions assemble. Bishop Rigaud de Asserio, of Winchester, in 1321, makes the same claim as to the regular four payments, but puts the age at eighteen, and even then only claims the oblation as a right in the case of those possessing some movables of their own. In some instances, apparently, a portion of the offerings made for any special object was by custom given to the priest for his own use, as a well-understood tax. This, for example, was the case at St. Augustine's church at Hedon, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, where in the fifteenth century "a third of the oblations to the Holy Cross was given to the Vicar."

The rectory house, which was situated near to the church, would no doubt in these days be considered very poor. A living-room and a bedroom, with perhaps a room in which to exercise "hospitality," with some necessary offices and a kitchen, were all that, as far as can be ascertained, constituted the dwelling-place of the parochial priest. "Religious feelings," says Dr. Rock, "sweetened the homeliness of every-day life." Over the parlour chimneypiece in the vicarage house at Besthorpe, Norfolk, built by Sir Thomas Downyng, priest, are these lines—

> "All you that sitt by thys fire warmyng
> Pray for the sowle of Sir Jhon Downyng."

Probably, in some place attached to the rectory there would have been some kind of enclosure, or priest's garden. Occasionally, mention is made of the existence of one, as, for instance, in the visitation of churches of the archdeaconry of Norwich, in 1363, where in one case the rector is said to

have in his use a house and garden "next to the rectory on the north side." But this seems to have been really parish property, as it is recorded that it "was sufficient to find all the candles in the church." Sometimes, no doubt, the priests' houses would have been larger than they usually appear to have been from the examples that survive or the



RECTORY, WEST DEAN, SUSSEX

records which are available. Thus in the early fifteenth century the Bishop of Lincoln granted a priest in his diocese permission to have a private oratory in his rectory house, on condition that the oratory was fittingly adorned, and that no other rite but Mass was celebrated in it. The Holy Sacrifice might be offered there either by him or any other priest in his presence.

A curious example of a poor rector being received as a boarder into a religious house is recorded in the register of Bishop Stapledon. The parish of Charles, in Devonshire, was, in 1317, found to be burdened with great debt, and its state evidently almost bankrupt. With the consent of the bishop, the rector, Walter de Wolfe, called upon the Prior of Pilton to help him out of his difficulties. It was consequently agreed that the best way was for the rector to come and live in the priory, and for the prior to farm the revenues of the parish for five years, during which time he should serve it, and with the savings pay off the debts of the rector.

The *Vicar* in many ways had the same work and responsibility as a rector in regard to all parochial duties. He was legally, however, as the word implies, one who took the place, or was the deputy of the rector. Although a rector, actually in possession of a parish and engaged in working it, could with permission and for adequate reasons appoint a vicar as *locum tenens*, in England almost universally by a "vicar" was meant the priest appointed to work a parish in the case of an impropriated living. The nature of these benefices has already been explained, and it is unnecessary here to do more than recall the fact, that although the greater tithes went to the monastery, college, or dignity to which the living had been impropriated, the appointed vicar had his portion of tithe, the oblations made to the church he served, and a pension settled by the episcopal authority. These, at any rate, with the rest of the income, afforded adequate support, with, in addition, sufficient to enable him to do the repairs of the chancel, which, in the case of the rectorial benefice, were incumbent on the parson.

This position of vicars only requires to be illustrated here very briefly. In 1322, Bishop Rigaud de Asserio, of Winchester, settled the means of support and the duties of the Vicar of Romsey, as between him and the abbess and convent. Every day the vicar was to have from the abbey two corrodies equal to what two nuns had. He was to take the tithes on flax, on hemp, and on fifteen other products of the soil; he was to have all funeral dues, and all legacies of dead people, except those specifically left for the repair, etc., of chancel; he was also to have certain lands to work for his own purposes, and to take all oblations made in the church. On the other hand, besides his ordinary duties, he was to pay all ecclesiastical dues and taxes; to find all books and ornaments of the church, and to repair and maintain them, as well also as to keep up and repair the entire chancel of the church. To take another case: the monks of Glastonbury, the impropriators of the parish of Doulting, in Somerset, received £18 a year in the sixteenth century from their portion of the impropriated tithe. Their vicar at the same time, with the duty of looking after the annexed chapels, took £43.

The mode of institution for a vicar was very much that of a rector. He was appointed by the impropriator of the living, acting as patron, and he had to receive the assent of the bishop of the diocese. By a statute of Cardinal Otho, confirming the practice of the English Church, "no one could be appointed to a vicarage unless he were a priest, or a deacon ready to be ordained a priest at the next *Quatuor temporum* ordination." On his appointment, he had to surrender every other ecclesiastical benefice, and to take an

oath that he would reside continually in his vicarage, so that any absence beyond the space of three weeks was unlawful.

The above legislation, of course, regarded only what were known as *perpetual vicars*—those, namely, that were appointed to impropriated livings with a tenure of office similar to that of rectors. The author of the gloss on the Constitution of Otho notes that in England there were really four kinds of vicars, or four classes of priests who were accounted or known as vicars: (1) those who for a stipend took the cures of rectors, or of perpetual vicars, temporally, and at the will of those who engaged them—these did not require the licence of the bishop, unless under special diocesan law; (2) those sent by the Pope, etc., to certain parts of the world were called vicars; (3) vicars appointed by the bishops, and known as *vicars-general;* and (4) the *perpetual vicars* of churches, instituted to the cure of souls by the bishop, and by his licence installed—these were most properly called vicars.

It is evident, from what is set out in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, that the vicar proper, if he found it necessary, had to provide help in the way of a curate. In this there was no distinction between a rector and a vicar; and it is obvious that, where this was required, provision for it had been made in the arrangement which had been come to in the first instance between the impropriators and the bishop; or that arrangement had subsequently been modified to enable the vicar to meet the expense of extra help.

Curates.—Next in importance among the parochial clergy come the assistant priests, known as *Curates* (*curati*), or those entrusted with the cure of souls. They are called in canon law *vice curati*, or *capellani*, who "administer the

sacraments, not in their own name, but in the name of another"—that is, in the name of the rector or perpetual vicar. They were also, as previously pointed out, in England occasionally called vicars, in the sense of taking the place of the rector, etc.

Every curate by law was to receive from the rector or vicar who employed him a fixed and sufficient salary, and all manner of bargains as to payment or contracting out of obligations were prohibited. Thus in the acts of the Synod of Ely, in 1364, Bishop Simon Langham says, "We strictly prohibit any rector from making a bargain with his (assistant) priest of this kind: that besides his fixed stipend he may take offerings for anniversary Masses, etc., since such a bargain is a clear indication that the fixed stipend is too small"—and to make it up, these fees are looked for, and the parish Masses may be neglected. In fact, by the Constitution of Archbishop Courtney, in 1391, the curates were to receive none of the oblations, fees, or offerings made in a parish, for services for which they received a sufficient payment from those who employed them.

According to the same Constitution, the curate was admitted to his office by the rector or vicar on any Sunday or Feast-day before the parishioners at the parochial mass. After the Gospel of the Mass the curate took an oath to respect the above conditions as to fees, etc., in the parish church or any chapel of ease in which he celebrated Mass, and declared that he would neither stir up nor take part in any quarrel or misunderstanding between the rector and his people; but that, on the contrary, he would ever strive to preserve both peace and love between them.

A curate thus instituted could only hear the confessions of parishioners in the church or chapel where he said Mass according to the leave and permission he had received: he was bound to be present in the choir of the parish church, vested in a surplice, at Matins, High Mass, Vespers, and other Divine service at the appointed hours on Sundays and festivals, together with the other ministers of the church, who were legally bound to assist at and increase the numbers of those present at these services, and not to remain in the nave or walk about in the cemetery, etc. On Sundays and Feast-days, when a funeral Mass had to be said, the curate, unless with leave of his rector, was not allowed to begin this Mass until after the Gospel of the High Mass. In their private lives curates were warned always to act as priests, and not to frequent taverns, plays, or illicit spectacles. In dress and carriage they were ever to uphold the credit of the ecclesiastical state, and not to bring scandal upon their rectors or upon themselves.

Sometimes the need of extra assistance in the parish was felt by the people, and very frequently they contributed the sum necessary for a curate's sufficient stipend. At times the people even appealed to the bishop to force the parson to seek additional help. Thus in the diocese of London, in the fourteenth century, there is recorded the complaints of the inhabitants of a parish that their vicar would not allow the services of a priest for whom they had paid, and that thus "they were deprived of daily Mass and other divine service, with the sacraments and sacramentals."

At times, indeed, the need of an assistant in a parish was so obvious that the bishop felt bound to interfere in order to

secure the appointment. Thus Bishop Rigaud de Asserio, of Winchester, in 1323, appointed a curate to the Vicar of Twyford, "who was suffering from an incurable disease" and unable to do the work of his parish. In the same way, in 1313–14, Bishop Stapledon, of Exeter, appointed a curate coadjutor to the Vicar of St. Neots, who was found to be suffering from leprosy. The vicar was to have a certain stipend; was to keep the best room in the parsonage, with the adjoining parts of the house, except the hall. The door between this room and the vicar's chamber was to be built up, and the newly appointed curate was to have the whole administration of the vicarage.

The *Chantry Priest.*—Next in order of importance among the priests of a mediæval parish come the clergymen serving any chantry attached to the church. These chantry chapels were, as is well known, very numerous in pre-Reformation days, particularly in towns; but it has hitherto not been sufficiently recognised that the priests serving them in any way helped in parochial work. This is simply because the purpose, for which those adjuncts to parish churches existed, has not been understood. We have been taught to believe that a "chantry" only meant a place (chapel or other locality) where Masses were offered for the repose of the soul of the donor, and other specified benefactors. No doubt there were such chantries existing, but to imagine that they were even the rule is wholly to mistake the purpose of such foundations. Speaking broadly, the chantry priest was an assistant priest of the parish, or, as we should nowadays say, curate of the parish, who was supported by the foundation fund of the benefactors for that purpose, and indeed not unfrequently even

by the contributions of the inhabitants. For the most part their *raison d'être* was to look after the poor of the parish, to visit the sick, and to assist in the functions of the parish church. Moreover, connected with these chantries were very commonly what were called "obits." These were not, as we have been asked to believe, mere money payments to the priest for some anniversary services; but they were for the most part money left quite as much for annual alms to the poor, as for the celebration of any anniversary offices. Let us take a few examples. In the city of Nottingham there were two chantries connected with the parish church of St. Mary's, that of Our Lady, and that called Amyas Chantry. The former, we are told, was founded "to maintain the services and to be an aid to the vicar, and partly to succour the poor;" the latter for the priest to assist in "God's service," and to pray for William Amyas, the founder. When the commissioners in the first year of Edward VI. came to inquire into the possessions of these chantries, they were asked by the people of the place to note that in this parish there were "1400 houseling people, and that the vicar there had no other priest to help but the above two chantry priests." It is not necessary to say that these foundations were not spared on this account; for within two years the property, upon which these two priests were supported, had been sold to two speculators in suchlike parcels of land—John Howe and John Broxholme.

Then, again, in the parish of St. Nicholas, at Nottingham, we find from the returns of the Commissioners that the members of the "Guild of the Virgin" contributed to the support of an extra priest. In the parish there were "more

than 200 houseling people," and as the parish living was very poor, there was no other priest to look after them but this one, John Chester, who was paid by the Guild. The King's officials, however, did not hesitate on this account to confiscate the property. It is useless to multiply instances of this kind, some hundreds of which might be given in the county of Nottingham alone. It may be interesting, however, to take one or two examples of "obits" in this part of England. In the parish of South Wheatley there were parish lands let out to farm, which produced 18*d.* a year; say from £1 to £1 4*s.* of our money. Of this sum, 1*s.* was for the poor and 6*d.* for church lights; that is, two-thirds, or, say, 16*s.* of our money, was for the relief of the distressed. So in the parish of Tuxford the church "obit" lands produced £1 5*s.* 4*d.*, or more than £16 a year; of this 16*s.* 4*d.* was intended for the poor, and 9*s.* for the church expenses. It is almost unnecessary to add that the Crown took the whole sum; that intended for the poor, as well as that used for the support of the ecclesiastical services. Neither can it be held, I fear, that the robbery of the poor was accidental and unpremeditated. It has been frequently asserted, of course, that although grave injury was undoubtedly done to the poor and needy in this way, it was altogether inevitable, since the money thus intended for them was so inextricably bound up with property to which religious obligations (now declared to be superstitious and illegal) were attached, that the whole passed together into the royal exchequer. It would be well if it could be shown that this spoliation of the sick and needy by the Crown of England was accidental and unpremeditated; but there

are the hard facts which cannot be got over. The documents prove unmistakably that the attention of the officials was drawn to the claims of the poor, and that in every such case these claims were disregarded, and a plain intimation was given that the Crown deliberately intended to take even the pittance of the poor.

The *Stipendiary* priest differed in little from the curate, except that he was engaged and paid for some special service, and not for the general purposes of a parish like a curate. They [*i.e.* the stipendiaries] live, says Lyndwood, upon the stipend paid them for their service, and have no fixed title or claim upon the church where they offer up their Mass, except that they are paid for doing so for a year or other fixed time. They had no claim whatever to fees or oblations, and, indeed, they were prohibited from receiving them.

Like all other priests dwelling within the bounds of a parish, Stipendiaries were bound to attend in the choir of the parochial church in surplice at Matins, High Mass, Vespers, and at all other public Divine service. They were to be ready to read the lessons, sing in the psalms and other chants, or take any other part, according to the disposition of the rector or vicar. Some entries in the Chantry certificates show that this duty was understood and fulfilled to the end. At Costessy, in Norfolk, to take but one example, a stipendiary priest was paid £6 by King's College, Cambridge, to offer Mass in a Free chapel, for the convenience of the people at a distance, and the certificate adds, "and the said priest hath always used to help the curate sing divine service upon holy day in the parish church."

Chaplain was a name given apparently to two sets of priests. The priest employed, by a nobleman or other person of distinction, to say Mass in a private chapel, and the priest who served a chapel of ease, established for the convenience of the people in a much extended parish, were both designated chaplains. Of the first, it is only necessary to say, that so far at the parish was concerned, it could claim the presence and help of even all private chaplains at the ordinary services of the church.

The public chaplains, or those who served in chapels of ease, were of greater importance in parochial work. The necessity for these chapelries appears clearly in the "Chantry certificates," under colour of the act for suppressing which most of the chapels were destroyed. Thus to take a few examples: The "Free chapel" of Tylne, in the parish of Hayton, in Cumberland, had been founded by a priest named Robert Poore. It had "always been accustomed to have all manner of Sacraments ministered by the chaplain there to the inhabitants of North and South Tylne. By reason that many times in the year such influence of waters and snow doth abound so much within the said hamlets, the inhabitants thereof can by no means resort unto their parish church of Hayton, being two miles distant from the said chapel, neither for christening, burying, or other rites." And again at South Leverton, in Nottinghamshire, there was a "chapel of Cottam, a mile distant from the parish church," at which eighty people received the Sacraments. And, adds the "certificate," "many times the waters being up the people cannot come to their parish church."

Such chapels were built at the cost of the people of

the parish, and under careful restrictions and conditions laid down by the bishop of the diocese. An excellent instance of this is to be found in the register of Bishop Brantyngham, of Exeter, where it is recorded that in 1372 he dedicated a chapel of ease at Dartmouth. Up to this time Dartmouth was in the parish of Townstall, which was a vicarage, the benefice being appropriated to the Premonstratensian Abbey of Torre. The people living at Dartmouth, failing to obtain permission to have a chapel, proceeded to build one without leave of the abbey or of their vicar. After considerable difficulty, and upon the intervention of the bishop, it was allowed that the people on the seashore, many of them old and infirm and women, frequently were unable to get to their parish church, especially in stormy winter weather. For this reason the erection of the chapel with a baptistery and cemetery was finally allowed, and they were permitted to find a chaplain to serve it, who was to be licensed from year to year, and admitted by the Vicar of Townstall. In the same way Bishop Stafford allowed the establishment of a chapel at Kingsbridge, in Devon, in 1414. The people who used the chapel had to maintain it, and even the chancel, as well as all the necessary books and ornaments. They were not charged, however, with the payment of their own chaplain, or with the provision of bread and wine for the Blessed Eucharist, which fell upon the rector of the parish of Churston. Burials of the dead had up to this time taken place at the mother church; but this, in view of circumstances adduced, the bishop thought unreasonable. On the Feast of the Dedication of the parish church, however, every adult was bound to attend there at the service and

to make an offering. Certain other dues also were ordered to be paid in acknowledgment of the ties of the chapel to the mother church.

At one place, a chaplain was employed by the rector to say Mass for the convenience of the people in a chapel attached to a house some distance from the parish church. In another chapel of ease, a parishioner left money for a foundation of three Masses weekly for the people; and at Tatton, near Bristol, the churchwardens, in 1506, were paying "Sir Richard York, chapel priest," 27*s.* 4*d.* a quarter for his services.

Besides the above-named priests, all more or less connected with the working of a mediæval parish, it was ordered that, wherever the means of the place would allow it, there should be always a deacon and subdeacon to assist in the due celebration of the Divine service. Chance references in accounts and other documents seem to show that they were often so employed. In one set of churchwardens' accounts there is a curious entry of receipt from a deacon, who pays for damage done to certain vestments at the time of his ordination. In another, a collection was made from the parishioners for the support of the deacon; and in a book of directions for clerics, it is laid down as part of the deacon's office to bring the pyx containing the Blessed Sacrament from behind the altar, where it had been hanging, and to place it on the table of the altar for the priest to communicate the faithful.

CHAPTER V

THE PARISH OFFICIALS

IF the parish priest, rector, or vicar was undoubtedly the admitted centre of life in the district, the father of his people and the pastor of his flock, neither on his part nor on that of the parishioners was there any mistake about the rights and duties of the people to the parish church and towards parish matters generally. Within well-defined limits, the parish, which included both parson and people, managed its own affairs. Every adult of both sexes had a voice in this self-government, and, as Bishop Hobhouse has pointed out, in pre-Reformation days a wise freedom in the management of the fabric of the church and its accessories seemed to have been left to the parish by the diocesan authorities. They—the people—encouraged by every means in their power, and indeed frequently initiated, those manifestations of zeal for beautifying God's house which form so remarkable a feature in the architectural history of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Moreover, it is impossible to turn over the church accounts of that period which have come down to us, without acknowledging that the love of the people for their parish churches was supported and intensified by the feeling that it was their work, and that upon

each of them in conscience lay the duty of assisting to maintain the sanctuary, where, according to their strong and simple faith, God dwelt in their midst, and of helping to keep up within this holy place the round of prayers and praise and sacrifice.

This common purpose of all within a parish was in those days not left to be carried out by chance or by mere individual effort; it was highly and intelligently organised to secure the co-operation and the continual contributions necessary for successfully carrying out the work. For this end certain officials were chosen by popular election as the people's representatives, others were appointed in various ways, and others, again, were employed as their services were required.

The Churchwardens.—The representatives of the people in all parochial work were their wardens, or the churchwardens, as they are generally called. Pollock and Maitland, in their *History of English Law*, do not think that there were real churchwardens before the thirteenth century. Previously, however, it is admitted that certain burdens as to the support of the church had been placed upon the parishioners as a body. "In the thirteenth century," for example, "the general custom of the Church of England, swerving in this from the *jus commune* of the Catholic Church, cast the burden of repairing the nave of the parish church, and providing the main part of the ecclesiastical apparatus, not upon the parson, but upon the parishioners." Whether this burden implied any corporate organisation of the parishioners or any parish meeting seems doubtful. But "no doubt the occasional nature of the charge almost compels the rector or the archdeacon

to deal with the parishioners as a body, to call them together, and endeavour to persuade them that a wall is crumbling or a new missal is wanting."

Still, whatever their origin, the churchwardens are already in existence in the thirteenth century; they are then dealt with as the legal representatives of the parishioners, and they "present themselves as claimants for property and possession." To the authors of the *History of English Law* their existence is due to the natural outcome of the responsibility placed upon the people. "If the parishioners are compelled to provide precious books, robes, vessels, etc., they will naturally desire to have their say about the custody of these articles; parsons have been known to sell the church plate."

In the fifteenth century the churchwardens were chosen annually in a parish meeting at which, no doubt, the rector or vicar would have presided; all adult members of the parish having a voice in the election. At this meeting the outgoing wardens would give an account of their stewardship, and hand over the custody of the common funds and common property to their successors. At the church of St. Mary the Great, Cambridge, for instance, a special parish meeting was held in the church, "at the altar of the doom in the south aisle," for the settlement of an account "between Thomas Curle, plumber, on the one part, and the parishioners." But this was quite out of the ordinary, and as a rule, once the guardians or wardens were elected, all the parish business was transacted by them. In this same church the wardens were chosen, apparently, on Easter Monday, and the method of election was somewhat curious. The outgoing churchwardens first

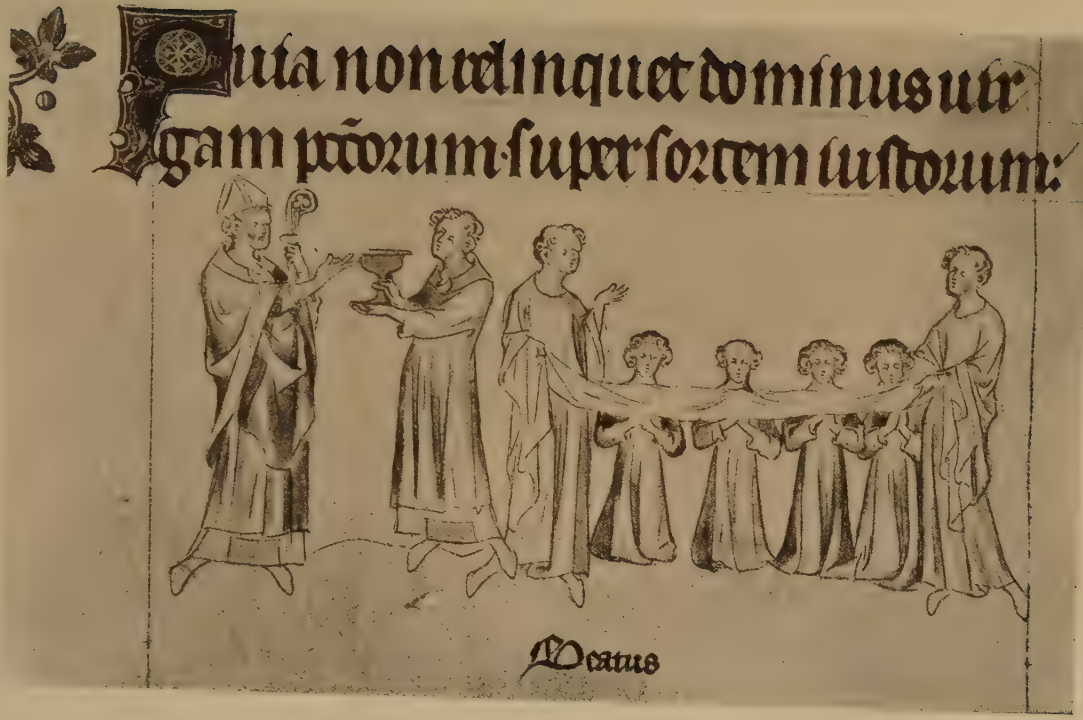
each nominated one parishioner, who conjointly chose eight persons to elect the officers of the coming year. In this case at Cambridge, besides the two churchwardens, there were at the same time elected for the parish two wardens of the lights at the Sepulchre and Crucifix; two guardians of the Jesus Mass; two parish auditors; and "two custodians of the keys of the chest, called the chantry hutch, in which are all the charters and deeds relating to the Chantry."

The number of churchwardens was, apparently by the fifteenth century, fixed to two, although for special purposes, as in the above instance, other wardens were appointed. In the accounts of St. Edmund and St. Thomas at Salisbury, there were at first three *supervisores fabricæ;* in 1486 two "gardiani ecclesiæ" were charged with beginning the reparation of the church at Easter, "and not to wait till winter." With these were two junior wardens, "custodians of the goods and ornaments of the church." Apparently, in times when considerable work was going on, one or more additional wardens were appointed to give advice and share responsibility; and once, at least, in the time of some great repairs to the fabric, the parish meeting stood adjourned from Friday to Friday until the works were finished. In 1510 two wardens were appointed, and it is curious to note that one held the purse, and the other, who did not, became his surety. At St. Mary-at-Hill, in London, the name for the official churchwardens was, apparently, the "Wardeyns of the godes, rents, and werks;" or, the "Wardens of the godes, ornaments, werkes, livelihood, and rents, etc."

Although the wardens were usually chosen from the men of a parish, there are examples to show that this need not

necessarily be the case. Thus the accounts of St. Petrock's, Exeter, show that in 1428 a woman, named Beatrice Braye, was people's warden; and in the same way, in 1496–7, "Dame Isabel Norton" held the office at Yatton, in Somerset.

Bishop Hobhouse, in his interesting volume of *Churchwardens' Accounts*, has well summed up the duties and functions of these parish wardens, which were very varied. They might have both farming and trading to do in fulfilment of their office, as well as disposing of various gifts which were made by the parishioners in kind. They also might have the unpleasant duty of presenting parishioners to the archdeacon's court for moral delinquencies. Besides this, if there was building or decorating to be done in the church or on buildings belonging to the parish, such as their common house, the wardens had to find the ways and means, and to supervise the work. They had to attend at Visitations, and if the church or the cemetery or a new chalice, etc., had to be consecrated, they had to arrange with the bishop and find the necessary fees. They had to see that the money due to the common purse from all the various sources was paid, and that, in the event of some extra work or engagement being undertaken by the parish, some method of raising the necessary funds was projected and carried out. At the same time, the wardens had no civil functions to perform until late in the reign of Henry VIII. In 1349, indeed, the Statute of Labourers names them, and tries to place upon them the duty of helping labourers to return to their homes; but the attempt came to nothing, and in the accounts printed by Bishop Hobhouse, the earliest entry for anything not strictly concerned with their parochial office is in 1512–13,



HOUSELING CLOTH FOR HOLY COMMUNION

when the wardens of Yatton "were charged with repairing the sluices and scouring the Yeo."

It was frequently no light task that the churchwardens undertook for their fellow-parishioners, for the parish possessions were considerable, and comprised all kinds of property—lands, houses, flocks and herds, cows, and even hives of bees. These were, what may be termed, the capital of the parish, which was constantly being added to by the generosity of generations of pious benefactors. Then, over and besides the chancel, which was the freehold of the parson, the body of the church and other buildings, together with the churchyard and its enclosure, and generally, if not always, the common church house, were then under the special and absolute control of the people's wardens. If the law forced the people of a parish to find fitting and suitable ornaments and vestments, it equally gave them the control of the ecclesiastical furniture, etc., of their church. Their chosen representatives were the guardians of the jewels and plate, of the ornaments and hangings, of the vestments and tapestries, which were regarded, as in very truth they were, as the property of every soul in the particular village or district in which the church was situated. It is no exaggeration to say that the parish church was in Catholic times the care and business of all. Its welfare was the concern of the people at large, and it took its natural place in their daily lives. Was there, say, building to be done, repairs to be effected, a new peal of bells to be procured, organs to be mended, new plate to be bought, and the like, it was the parish as a corporate body that decided the matter, arranged the details, and provided for the payment. At times, let us

say when a new vestment was in question, the whole parish might be called to sit in council at the church house on this matter of common interest, and discuss the cost, the stuff, and the make.

The parish wardens had their duties, also, towards their poorer brethren in the district. In more than one instance they were guardians of a common chest, out of which temporary loans could be obtained by needy parishioners to enable them to tide over pressing difficulties. These loans were secured by pledges and the additional surety of other parishioners. No interest, however, was charged for the use of the money, and in cases where the pledge had to be sold to recover the original sum, anything over and above was returned to the borrower. In other ways, too, the poorer parishioners were assisted by the corporate property of the parish. The stock managed by the wardens "were," says one of the early English reformers, "in some towns (*i.e.* townships and villages) six, some eight, and some a dozen kine, given unto the stock for the relief of the poor, and used in some such wise that the poor 'cottingers,' which could make any provision for fodder, had the milk for a very small hire; and then the number of the stock reserved (that is, of course, the original number being maintained), all manner of vailes (or profits), besides both the hire of the milk and the prices of the young veals and old fat wares, was disposed to the relief of the poor." *

To take one or two specific instances. The churchwardens' accounts for St. Dunstan's, Canterbury, show how the funds required for the repair of the parish church and other parish

* Lever, *Sermon before the King*, 1550 (Arber's Reprint, p. 82).

work were obtained. The people of the district were banded together in brotherhoods; those that were authorised to beg wore "scutchons," or badges, and the special fraternity was called the "schaft." They received anything that was given to them, in kind as well as in money; and the record speaks of malt, barley, wheat, cows, and sheep belonging to the parish. One Nicholas Reugge left, by will, four cows to be let at a rent, the proceeds to pay for the "paschal light," which the parishioners had to find, and for which they were to be freed from all further obligation. These cows, valued at 10*s.* each, were leased out at 2*s.* apiece. In 1521 a farmer, John Richardson, hired from the wardens twenty-five sheep, and at the same time the people's representatives accounted for receipts from lambs, wool, etc. Everything goes to show, says Mr. Cowper, the sympathetic editor of these accounts, "what life and activity there was in the little parish, which never wanted willing men to devote their time and influence to the management of their own affairs." The churchwardens' accounts generally, it may be added, tell the same story, and show, as one writer has well said, "the simple-mindedness of the population, their cheerful contentment, the general absence of fraud, their religious feelings, and general goodwill towards each other."

According to early legislation, the churchwardens had to present their settlement in writing to a committee of the parishioners, who were to be appointed by the parsons for the purpose, and these accounts were to be handed to the archdeacons at the time of their visitations. Thus Bishop Quevil, in the Synod of Exeter, in 1287, declares that the inventories of all that belonged to the church should be

made yearly by the wardens and produced before the rectors, vicars, or, at any rate, the parish chaplains, and that such property should on no account be used for other purposes. Also, that whatever was given for a definite purpose, such as a light in the church, etc., must not be used for anything else.

Property, in greater or lesser amounts, houses, lands, cattle, and rich hangings, etc., were constantly being left by will, or otherwise given to the churchwardens as trustees for the parish. The Yarmouth wills of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries contain bequests to particular altars and lights in St. Nicholas's Church. Jeffery Wyth, for example, in 1302 gave 5*s.* "for maintaining a lamp continually burning before the great crucifix." Richard Fastalfe, by his will made in 1356, gave a tenement to St. Mary's light in the same church. In 1400 Thomas Pound directed his executors "to supply a lamp with oil burning day and night," and five wax candles standing "about the lamp before the Most Holy, or High Altar, to the honour of the Sacrament in the time of Divine Service, as the said Thomas in his life-time had used to do, to continue for ever." In the same way, in 1480, Rose Wrytell, a parishioner of St. Mary-at-Hill, left to the churchwardens, as trustees, certain houses to find the stipend for a chantry priest, who was to be appointed by the parishioners, and who was to assist at all the services.

The churchwardens frequently had considerable responsibility in regard to their office, and if they did not get more frequently into serious financial difficulties than they apparently did, it was owing to the cordial way in which the parish generally supported their endeavours to serve them.

In St. Peter Cheap, in London, the churchwardens held a good deal of property as trustees. They embarked on "making and finishing our vestry" in 1475, and the names of those contributing to the work cover a whole page. We find them repairing and decorating chantries; employing a priest to serve; making the priests' chambers in Cock Alley, where, apparently, the parson and the chantry priests dwelt in common; engaging in organ making and paying for a player and for "the readers of the Passion" on Palm Sunday. The "Morrow Mass" priest, whose duty it was to say Mass every day at six o'clock, was paid for by the wardens on behalf of the parish, as well as a clerk to serve his Mass.

In some documents connected with Exeter diocese in the fifteenth century, some of the personal difficulties in which the wardens might be involved are set out. In one case, where a good deal of repair to the fabric of the church was necessary, the churchwardens excused themselves on the plea that the tenants of certain houses belonging to the parish, upon the rents of which they had relied, had not paid for some time; in a second case, the excuse made was that parishioners who had promised help had not given it; in a third, the parishioners had agreed to a rate to repair the church and bell-tower, and many had not paid according to their promises. In every case the bishop, whilst warning the people to keep their obligations, pointed out that the "guardians," or churchwardens, were personally responsible.

Again, there are many examples, in the accounts of the various parishes, which show that the people considered the parochial goods held by the churchwardens, even when they were in the shape of vestments and plate, as their own

property. They exchanged them, lent them, and sold them—always, of course, for the benefit of the church. In the wardens' accounts of St. Mary the Great, Cambridge, there are several examples of this open dealing with church goods. One instance of this kind of dealing is worth recording. In the parish of Yatton, Somerset, on the eve of the Reformation—about 1520, say—a difficulty, to which reference has already been made, arose as to the repair of certain sluices to keep back the winter floods. To make a long story short—in the end, the parishioners were ordered to make good the defect. It meant money; and the wardens' accounts show that they had been spending money generously on the church. It was consequently decided that to raise the necessary cash they should sell a piece of silver church plate, which had been purchased some years before by the common contributions of the faithful. The instance furnishes a supreme example of the way in which the people of a mediæval parish regarded the property of God's house as their own.

Parish Clerk, or Holy-water Bearer (*Aquæbajularius*).—Second only in importance to the churchwardens was the *parish clerk*, or, as he was frequently called from one of his chief duties, the "water-bearer." Originally, as the name "clerk" implies, he was a cleric, and his office was considered to be a regular ecclesiastical benefice. In the fourteenth century the clerk was married, but one such was fined for the offence in a visitation in that century in the Salisbury diocese. In process of time, however, owing to the scarcity of clerics, the office was often held by a married layman.

The English law as to this official was laid down in

the Constitution of Archbishop Boniface of Savoy, in the thirteenth century. The benefice was, according to this, to be bestowed "upon poor clerks." And as there had been many disputes about the bestowal of the office, the archbishop decreed that henceforward "the rectors and vicars (of parish churches), who know better than parishioners those that are fit for the office, shall institute such clerics in these benefices as they know in their hearts can and will properly serve in the Divine offices (of the church) and will obey their directions." Upon which law Lyndwood remarks, that it is always the privilege of the Ecclesiastical Superior to appoint his inferiors in his own church, and that it is no part of the right of any patron; which, in this instance, may be taken to include the parishioners, who were supposed to find the salary. In the manuscript accounts of the wardens of St. Botulph's, Aldersgate Street, a payment of £4 a year was made to the clerk, and this sum was specially collected for the purpose.

HOLY WATER CLERK

A note "of clerke wage owing" in the accounts of St. Michael's in Bedwardine, Worcestershire, makes it appear that there, ordinarily, each householder paid 1*d.* a quarter for the clerk, although one person, to whom is prefixed the title of "Mr.", evidently pointing to a man of "class," paid a shilling each time. St. Mary-at-Hill, in London, paid its clerk at the rate of £6 13*s.* 4*d.* a year, and he also received

certain offerings at obits, etc., kept in the church. The regular wage was specially, although apparently not very regularly, collected by the wardens.

The actual payment of the clerk was sometimes a difficulty; and Archbishop Boniface anticipates this possibility by asserting the English custom of the parish paying for his services. It was in consequence of this, he says, that parishioners had asserted their right to make the appointment. He directs that, should there be objection made to

BLESSING OF FOOD BY HOLY WATER CLERK

this payment by any parish, the people should be compelled to do their plain duty by ecclesiastical censures. On the other hand, Archbishop Peckham seems to have thought it reasonable that those who paid the money should elect to the office, and held that the parishioners ought to appoint the parish clerks to their offices.

Lyndwood speaks of a praiseworthy English custom, according to which every father of a family made an offering on the Sundays to the cleric who brought the holy water to him; and that at Christmas the officer should have from

each household a loaf, at Easter a certain number of eggs, and in the autumn so much of the harvesting. It may also be taken as an established custom that each quarter of the year the clerk received a sum of money for his support levied upon the entire parish. A curious entry in the accounts of the church of St. Mary the Great at Cambridge, shows a payment made by the parish "in reward to a yong man that should have bene parish clerk," suggesting that the churchwardens wanted him, but the rector made another appointment.

The Synod of Exeter, in 1287, so frequently referred to in regard to the laws and customs of the English Church, declares that, according to tradition, "the benefice of the Blessed Water" was at first instituted to help poor clerks, whilst they were studying and thus fitting themselves for higher dignities. To this end Bishop Quevil directs, as already pointed out, that in all churches not more than ten miles distant from any school of a city or town, this purpose should be borne in mind, and the office given to a poor scholar to help him whilst at his studies. For this reason, no doubt, there are instances in which the bishop insisted upon the removal of a parish clerk who had married, and upon the appointment of another, whose intention it was to proceed to the reception of Holy Orders. At the same time it is quite clear that the bishop did not lightly interfere in the appointment or removal of any parish clerk. In one case, on November 13, 1386, Bishop Brantyngham refused to take cognisance of the appeal of the parishioners of Pont, in Cornwall, who, not being content with the appointment made by their rector, had caused the churchwardens to elect another. This the bishop

altogether condemned, declaring that by law the appointment was in the hands of the rector.

Besides attending to carry the Holy Water on the Sundays, the clerk, according to the directions given in the tract called "Cilium Oculi Sacerdotis," was to assist the priest at the altar, and to read the Epistle at Mass, when there was no deacon or subdeacon. He might be vested in an alb when he performed this service. It was part of his duty also to teach the children of the parish, not only their prayers, creed, and religion, but also their letters and "whatever singing they ought to know."

A curious document relating to the "Offesse of dekyn" in Trinity Church, Coventry, in 1462, has been printed more than once, and lately for the *Henry Bradshaw Society*, by Dr. Wickham Legg. Some of the duties there set forth for the "deacon" show that in this case he acted as parish clerk, and his duties are most minutely described. He was to open the door of the church at six o'clock, and have the chalice and missal ready for the priest who said "the Trinity Mass:" on all feasts he was to ring for Matins, and bring in the books for the south side of the choir: he was to ring for the High Mass, and then sing in the choir, and again at three o'clock for Evensong. He shall be rector in the choir on the south side: he is to see that there is a deacon to read the Gospel at every High Mass.

Beside this he has the general care of the church: to see that the floor be swept when it needs it, and that the snow is taken off the roof and from out the gutters: that the font be ready for the blessing on Holy Saturday, and palms before Palm Sunday, and that palms be burned for ashes before

Ash Wednesday. For the blessing of the font he is to provide three copies "for the priests to sing *Rex Sanctorum*." Every Sunday "he shall bear holy water to every house in his ward, and he to have his due of every man, after his degree, quarterly." In the same way he must see that the holy cake is ready every Sunday according to every man's degree, "and he shall bear the holy bread to serve the people in the north syde of the church, and he to go to them on 'twelfth day' for his offering to the repair of his surplice. On Shere Thursday (the Thursday in Holy Week) and Holy Saturday he is to get ready a barrell for the blessed water, and on the former he is to have the 'birch besom for the priest that washes the altar' and the three discipling rods."

Moreover, at "every principal feast" he is to help the churchwardens "to array the High Altar with clothes necessary for it," being ready for them "at the third peal of the first Evensong." He is to help "the churchwardens to cover the altar and the rood in lent with lenten cloths, and to hang the veil in the choir." He and "his fellow" is to look to the bells and provide ropes and grease, and they are to divide the ringing fees between them. He is "to cover the pulpit with a pall when any doctor preaches." He is to go vested in his surplice to accompany the parson when he goes to take the Blessed Sacrament to the sick, and "to fetch any corpse to the church."

The second "deacon" or clerk, commonly called "the fellow" of the first in this document, has also his special duties assigned. Every week-day he is to ring the second peal for Matins at half-past six. He is to see to the books on the north side of the choir, and sing on that side as the

first "deacon" does for the south. At Evensong he shall do in like manner, but "he shall be subdeacon every Sunday and Holy-day at the procession and Mass, and read the Epistle. Generally he is to assist the "deacon" with the choir books and processionals, and help to fold up the vestments and albs, etc.

Beyond the above-named parish officials there were, obviously, many others whose services were occasionally required. Amongst others are:

The *Sexton*, whose office was what it remains at the present day. Such an official is named, in 1490, in the parish accounts of Cratfield; but the extremely rare mention of the name seems to show that in a mediæval parish each individual family interested saw to the preparation of the last resting-place of any of their dead relations.

The *Schoolmaster*, or, at any rate, one who occupied the place of a teacher of the young, is more frequently named in connection with the parish than many people would be inclined to believe. An examination of the records of parish life contained in the invaluable *Valor Ecclesiasticus* will reveal the fact of the existence of both grammar and song schools in many places in the sixteenth century. At Preston, in Amounderness, for instance, a chantry priest was bound to keep a "free grammar school" for the parish, and at the suppression of the chantry, the lands left to support this were seized by the Crown. The official returns by the Commissioners for suppressing the chantries afford many examples of these schools taught by priests and by clerks. These generally, no doubt, existed by reason of special foundations made by generous benefactors for the purpose; but in one case at

least, at Lavenham, "the alderman of St. Peter's Guild" finds a priest who "teaches the children of the said town and acts as secondary to the curate, who, without help of another priest, is not able to serve the cure there."

The *Bell-ringer* was an important official in every parish. His first duty was to ring for the services in the church, and to toll the bell for deaths, funerals, obits, or anniversary services. If his wages were paid by the parish, his labours were in most places one of the sources of income by which the parish chest was replenished, as the fees charged brought in more than the amount paid to him. In some places, besides his duty in regard to the bells, he was appointed to look after various lamps or lights. Thus at Swaftham, in Norfolk, one Simon Blake appoints "a lamp to burn by his grave on all holidays and Lord's days, from Matins to Compline, and the bellman of the town of Swaffham to take care of it."

At times, too, the bellman was employed in making collections for some church purpose. Thus at Sutherton, in 1485, the bellman, named Saunder, was engaged in soliciting money for keeping two lights at the High Altar, and he was paid by the churchwardens for going to Lincoln "to bring home the waxe," for the making of candles for the consecration of the church. At St. Nicholas's Church, Great Yarmouth, in 1511, the bellman was paid for covering the images in Lent-time. But, so far as the parish was concerned, the most important function of this official was his proclamation of deaths and anniversaries. In one of the York wills there is a bequest of 6*d.* to the bellman for announcing the funeral of the testator. Sir Adam Outlaw, priest, bequeaths a tenement to the West Lynn town bellman on condition

of his "going with his bell about the town" on his "year-day" to ask the people to "pray for the souls of Thomas of Acre and Muriel his wife, his (Sir Adam's) soul, and the souls of his benefactors."

In like manner, the Guild of St. Botulph's Church at Boston employed the bellman to announce the anniversaries of its brethren. Thus, in January the Sacrist was to remember to send him round about the city to proclaim the obit day of Richard Chapman, and proclaim each year his will. At each street he was to ring his bell and say: "For the sowles of Richard Chapeman and Alys his wyf, brother and syster of Corpus Christi Gylde to-morne (*i.e.* to-morrow) shall be theyre yere day," for which service he was to receive a penny. This crier was constantly being sent round on similar errands for other guilds, and from these same records the names of some eight such societies, besides the Corpus Christi Guild, are known: that is, St. Mary's Guild, that of the Trinity, and those of St. George, St. Peter, the "Felichyp of Heven," Seven Martyrs, St. Katherine, and the Apostles. The object of these constant proclamations was, of course, to call the various members of fraternities and societies to attend at funerals and anniversary masses and pray for the souls of the brethren and sisters who had gone before them to that future life, which in those days of simple faith was hardly less a reality to all Christian folk than the present world which their senses told them about.

The bells used by the bellmen seem, from some inventories, to have been the property of the parish. They are called "Rogation bells," from their use in calling people to the church, and they were rung in the funeral procession

from the house of the deceased parishioner to the church. In 1463, John Baret, of Bury St. Edmunds, directs that the two bellmen, who go about the town on his death announcing his funeral, are to have gowns given them. And at "my yeer-day," he adds, they are to have each 4*d.* for going about the town to call on the inhabitants "to pray for my soul, and for my faderis and modrys," and the same for ringing on the "month's mind."

Another remarkable custom, which seems to have been no novelty in the middle of the fifteenth century, was the use of a chime barrel set with the tune of the *Requiem æternam*, the Introit of the Mass for the dead. This, as it only ranged over five notes, was easily managed, and the instrument was wheeled throughout the town, grinding out this lament for some departed inhabitant. The John Baret named above makes special arrangements for this to be done at Bury on his decease, for thirty days after, and during the following Lent-time.

Of people employed at various times and for diverse purposes by the parish, there were a great many about whom very little need be said. Over and above masons and carpenters and women to wash surplices and albs and repair vestments, who may be called regular employees, the accounts of the churchwardens show that many others were, from time to time, paid by the parish funds. One of the most regular, naturally, when lights were so much used, was the *Candlemaker*, who apparently travelled about from place to place exercising his art. At Cowfield, in Sussex, for instance, in the years 1471–85, the churchwardens' payments for candlemaking were at regular intervals, and besides

finding the wax and the wages, the wardens supplied also the board and lodging for the master workman. At Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, the wardens, in 1537, bought 35 lbs. of wax, at *7d.* a pound, "for the Sepulchre and Roode lyghtes;" they paid *5s.* for making it up, and *2s.* 3½*d.* "for a dinner at the making." At St. Mary-at-Hill, London, "Roger Middelton, wax channdeler," was paid "for makyng of the said ryeve loen (92 lbs.) and olde wax, made in tapris for the Bemelight and other tapris, prickettes, and tenebre candilles, for every lb. a half-penny—11 shilling *9d.*

In the same way parishes employed travelling bookmakers, that is, scribes and bookbinders and illuminators. Thus, as an instance, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the wardens of St. Augustine's Church, at Hedon, in the East Riding, paid *10s. 8d.* for parchment to make a book; to Adam Skelton, a scribe, for writing it, *4d.*; to "John Payntor for a picture, *10s.*," and *6d.* for the breakfasts of the scribes. There is evidence that sometimes the curate of a parish acted as a scribe, and received a fee for so doing; sometimes clerics at other places were employed, as a clerk at the Almonry at Canterbury, who wrote a book for the church of St. Dunstan in that city.

The same applies also to the *Bookbinder*, who used to ply his trade from place to place, repairing the old and making new bindings for new and old manuscript service and music books. So too the same evidence of the accounts of churchwardens shows the *Painter*, the *Carver*, the *Silversmith*, the *Gilder*, and the *Tinker* constantly at work in various places, according to the needs and means and enterprise of the English parochial authorities.

In all cases it was the work of the people. Through their wardens they arranged, superintended, and finally settled the accounts of these various travelling workmen and artists. How they raised the money required for all the work that was carried out during the last half of the fifteenth century must always remain a mystery. Some account of their ways of collecting funds for parochial purposes will appear in the next chapter; but when all is said, the mystery remains.

CHAPTER VI

PAROCHIAL FINANCE

IN view of the many expenses which devolved upon the wardens in the working of a mediæval parish, it is important to try to understand how they were able to raise the necessary funds. In the first place, of course, it must be understood that the churchwardens had nothing to do with the tithes—that is, with the regular charge on the produce of the land, which was from the first intended for the support of the clergy, for the poor, and for the maintenance of the chancel portion of the church's fabric. These were received in due course, according to the law, by the parson, or vicar, or by their agent, without any reference to the popular representatives of the parish as such, and except for an occasional donation from the priest to the common fund for some special purpose, the parish exchequer took nothing whatever from the tithe due to the clergyman.

The methods by which the people of a parish raised money for their works were many and various, and some of them curious; some few of them must needs be touched upon briefly in any account of the life of a mediæval parish. In the first place, then, may be mentioned the occasional *voluntary assessment* of the people of a parish, according

to their possessions, sometimes called "setts," or "cess." This, however, was not a very common way of raising money, and recourse was had to it, apparently, only in the case of extraordinary repairs upon the church becoming necessary. From the many examples that are to be found in the extant accounts, the voluntary rate was evidently difficult to enforce, especially when the amount claimed had, more or less, to be proportioned to the property of individuals. Still, in some places, it was clearly very successful as a means of raising money; as, for instance, at Wigtoft, in Lincolnshire, where, in 1525, the accounts show that the church was completely repaired by money obtained by a voluntary rate. Here a list of eighty-six inhabitants is given, who are assessed at sums varying from *1d.* to *3s. 4d.* Although the unequal incidence of the tax was evidently admitted by all, it was apparently held that when the parish had made the rate, its vote was binding upon every one. At St. Dunstan's, Canterbury, in 1485, a church rate, or "cess," produced *£4 5s. 1½d.*, in sums varying from John Roper's *6s. 8d.* to Richard Crane's *4d.*; whilst at the same time extra "gifts of devotion" are recorded of sums varying from *½d.* to *4d.* Between 1504 and 1508 another parish "cess," in the same place, produced nearly *£6.*

Closely allied to a parochial rate, although not so universal, nor, of course, possessing the binding force of a public assessment, were *joint voluntary gifts* for special purposes. Something in the way of decoration, or of a bell, a window, a vestment, or a piece of plate was wanted, and the people, as one account expresses it, immediately "drew themselves together" to pay for it, or to purchase it. For instance, at Morebath, a small uplandish parish in Somerset, on the

borders of Devon, in 1538–9, some of the inhabitants bought a new cope for their church at the cost of £3 6*s.* 8*d.* From 1528, also, in the same place, the vicar gave up his rights over certain tithes of wool to add to the sum then being collected to purchase a "new suit of black vestments." It is perhaps worth noting that these were only obtained for £6 5*s.* in 1547, just before the alterations in religion made them useless.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century a change is noticeable in the accounts of the churchwardens. It evidently became more and more common for them to possess lands, and to have houses left to them, as trustees of the parish; the revenues of these were used only for parochial purposes, and mainly, perhaps, for the upkeep of lights and the celebration of anniversaries. Running through all the wills of this period, too, is a manifestation of the same spirit of devotion to the parochial churches, with which the donors had been connected during life, and the same eager desire to leave something in money or in kind to them is everywhere seen. These naturally, if not by express desire, came into the charge and guardianship, not of the parson of the place, but of the people's wardens, who were responsible for the Church goods.

Instances of such gifts are so numerous that the selection of examples is rendered almost impossible, and they are taken here almost at haphazard. At Woodchurch, in Cheshire, in 1525, one James Godyker left to the wardens of his parish church 20 marks to buy twenty bullocks to be let for the purpose of bringing sufficient revenue to find an extra priest. In Nottingham, a shop in "Shoemakers row"

was left to sustain a lamp; in other places in that county there are "divers lands to pay an extra priest, who has also a house;" "money is bequeathed to be distributed unto the poore yerly;" "arable land was given for a light;" "medow land for a lamp;" a "stock of 5 sheep, valued at 2*s.* 8*d.* each, and one cow valued at 8*s.*;" "two stocks of money 10*s.* and 26*s.* 8*d.* in the tenure of Robert Braunesby, Edward Dawson," etc., and "20*s.* in the tenure of Richard Blank—the interest being 4*d.* on every noble," etc.

Then *collections* were made by the assent of the parish at various times and in different ways. Thus *The Early History of the Town and Port of Hedon*, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, shows the wardens of St. James' making collections in the town for church purposes three times a year. At the feast of St. Mary Magdalene they themselves collected both through the town and in the fair, like the wardens of St. Augustine's. On the feast of St. John, during Christmas week, boys were sent round with collecting bags, and each boy received 1*d.* for his pains. In the parish of St. Augustine's, in the same place, there were many receipts from these collections, such as: "collections in the city, 5*s.*;" "in the church on the feast of the Circumcision, 10*s.*;" "on St. Mary Magdalene's day, with relics in the city, 15*s.*;" "on all Sundays with the *tabula*, 8*s.*" This last form of collecting seems to have been very popular at Hedon and elsewhere, and probably refers to the method of carrying round some holy picture to excite the devotion and generosity of the people. In the same way, and with the same end, in numberless places relics of the saints were taken about by the collectors for the reverence of the faithful.

At St. Dunstan's, Canterbury, the outdoor collections were made by members of the various brotherhoods, which, to the number of eight or nine, were attached to the church. In the same way the parish cross, which may be considered to be the corporation banner of the parishioners, was carried round the city or district to remind the people of their duty to assist in the corporate work and to stimulate their devotion.

The times for making regular collections naturally varied in different places. In the church of St. Helen's, Worcester, for instance, there seem to have been three yearly collections for general church purposes, namely: *Lux fulgebit* Sunday (Christmas), Paschaltide, and the "standing afore the church at the Fayre." These regular days did not, of course, interfere with other special collections in the same parish, as "for St. Katherine's light," "our Lady light," "the Clerke's money," "Peter's farthings," etc. At St. Edmund and St. Thomas, Salisbury, special collections were made for the fabric on every Good Friday and Easter day. On the latter day, in one year in this parish, £2 10*s.* 1½*d.* were contributed to the "font taper," which would appear from other accounts to be the name for the penny given by each man, and the halfpenny given by each woman, who communicated on Easter day—a contribution which was prohibited by some bishops, as likely to be misunderstood. With this view, the payment was ordered to be transferred till the Sunday following the Easter Communion.

Collections for specific objects are, perhaps, the most common in all parochial accounts. In one, the holy water vat for the asperges and the thurible are said to have been

purchased by collections "made by boys of the parish." In another, that of St. Mary-at-Hill, such collections were very constant; money for "candlesilver" was regular, and for such objects as the new "Rood loft," etc., frequent. At St. Petrock's, Exeter, in 1427, there was an agreement made as to the candle money, which in those days was obviously a constant and a heavy expense in every parish. It was to this effect—

"Ordinans made by the eight men for gatheryn to the waxe sylver kep to the lighte beforr the high-cross, whyche saye is, that every man and hys wyffe to the waxe shall paye yerely one peny, and every hired servant that taketh wages a hallfe peny, and every other persons at Ester, takyn no wage, a farthyng."

Sometimes the wardens placed a collecting-box in the church to receive general offerings towards parochial expenses. This seems to have led at times to difficulties with the parson, and at one time it was prohibited. Bishop Quevil, of Exeter, for example, says that the practice introduced into some parishes of putting a box, either into the church or outside, to gather alms, has led "to contentions between the rector and his parishioners." Some of the latter have further declared that "it was a better almsdeed to put money into the common box than to give it to the priest," and in this way the priests do not get their accustomed offerings. They do not, for instance, get from the laity their donations towards the candles on the Feast of the Purification and other feasts of the year, "according to laudable custom," but these gifts go into the hands of the wardens "for a light before the great crucifix, etc." The bishop consequently

orders that all such collecting-boxes be removed from the churches or cemeteries of his diocese at once.

Regular Sunday collections were made in certain places for the wants of the parish. The Hythe churchwardens, although depending mainly upon gifts and legacies for the money necessary to satisfy their obligations, had public collections on twenty-six Sundays in the year. The people were apparently few, and the collections did not produce much; the total being only 34*s.* 4*d.* for the six months, and the individual collection varying from 6*d.* to 1*s.* 6*d.*; except on Easter Sunday, when the collectors seem to have gathered 10*s.* 6*d.* In 1498 the parochial needs at Leverton, in Lincolnshire, became so great that the two wardens, Christopher Pyckyll and Robert Tayler, made an appeal at "ye gathering of the townschyp and in the kyrke," with the result that they collected the sum of £4 13*s.* 10*d.* for the building of the steeple.

ALMS BOX, BLYTHBURGH, SUFFOLK

One of the most regular sources of parochial receipt was the fee for burial in the church or churchyard. To judge from several entries in various accounts, the cost of opening a grave in the nave of the church was 6*s.* 8*d.*, which belonged to the parish. Thus at St. Mary's, Cambridge, in 1515, in

the churchwardens' receipts there are two such items, one for the burial of Calo Fremeston, and the other for that of a "Mr. Wise." In London, as we might perhaps expect, the fee was greater; in fact, in the accounts of St. Mary-at-Hill, in 1522–3, among the "Casuell Resceites" are entered those "for the buryall of John Colers in the chirche, 13*s.*; for the buryall of William Holyngworthi's child, 2*s.*; for the buryall of a stranger in the great churchyard, 12*d.*; for the buryall of a priest in the pardon churchyard, 2*s.*; for the buryall of Robert Hikman in St. Ann's Chapel, 13*s.* 4*d.*" This same year a regular table of "fees to be paid" to the parish for burials in the church, churchyard, or pardon-churchyard attached to the church of St. Mary's was drawn up. From this we learn that for every grave opened, in either of the two chapels of St. Stephen and St. Katherine, 13*s.* 4*d.* was to be paid: for every man, woman, and child buried "without the choir door of any of the said chapels . . . unto the west door of the aisle going south or north," 10*s.* was to be paid; and for any burial "from the cross aisle to the west end of the church," 6*s.* 8*d.* The price of the ground thus varied according to the position, and similarly the clerk's fee varied for breaking the ground: it was 3*s.* 8*d.* in the first case, 2*s.* 6*d.* in the second, and 1*s.* 8*d.* in the third. These payments, of course, had nothing to do with the fee of the clergyman: this was fixed at 1*d.* as a minimum, but generally more was given according to the means of the family. The smallness of the fee may perhaps be explained by the English custom of "mortuaries," that is, the gift of the best or second best possession of the deceased to the church.

"In some places (says Bracton) the church has the best beast, or the second or the third best, and in some places nothing; and therefore the custom of the place is to be considered . . . and although no one is bound to give anything to the church for burial nevertheless, where the laudable custom exists the Lord the Pope does not wish to break through it."

Immediately connected with the subject of burials were two practices, which brought some additions to the parochial exchequer. The first was the custom of special payments made for the use of the best cross, etc., if the parish was possessed of one. It would seem that generally, besides the processional cross, every parish had a second cross used at funerals, but occasionally they had either purchased or in some way become possessed of a more magnificent and elaborate crucifix. For the use of this last the wardens as a rule made a charge, and this payment brought some money into the common purse. Thus the churchwardens' accounts of St. Ewen's, Bristol, show that, about the middle of the fifteenth century, the parish made a precious crucifix of this kind. People contributed all manner of broken silver and jewels for the work, and all sorts and conditions of men and women gave of their riches or their poverty to it. Alice Sylkwoman, for instance, gave a ring, and Thomas Fisher an old spoon, etc. When the work of art was finished it was weighed before the parson and the parishioners, and, not counting the bar of iron in its centre, it was found to be 116 ounces of "clere sylver and gold." No sooner was it made than it was arranged to charge a special fee for its use, and in 1459–60 one of the parishioners, "Thomas Phelyp, barber," paid the fee "for the best cross at his Wyf's buryeng."

In the same way the churchwardens appear to have let out the bier and lights to be used at funerals for the payment of a fee. The parish lights especially are very frequently named in the accounts of the churchwardens; although not infrequently the torches were furnished by the various guilds, the members of which had sometimes the right of hiring them for the burials of friends. In this way, to take but one example, the wardens of the parish of Ashburton in 1523–24 let out "the best cross and parish tapers" to a neighbouring parish, and received 21*s.* 8*d.* for the transaction; a very notable addition to the parochial income. Parishioners also paid for the use of the parish cross and candlesticks at funerals in their own church. In the same way, the vestments and plate and hangings were lent for a payment to other parishes for a great funeral or festival. In the accounts of St. Mary-at-Hill, for instance, 4*s.* 8*d.* were paid by "the churchwardens of All Hallows in Lombard Street for hyryng of the church stuffe."

A further source of income was found towards the beginning of the sixteenth century when the letting of pews or seats in the church became a custom. The revenue from this was always successfully claimed by the wardens in behalf of the parishioners, on the ground, no doubt, that the nave of the church where these seats had been erected was their property, and that the fee for the exclusive right of any special portion belonged to them, on the same principle as the money for the sale of any particular part for a grave. This practice of letting pews for the use of individuals has already been sufficiently illustrated by examples.

The practice of leaving sums of money by will to the wardens for definite purposes was almost universal in the last

half of the fifteenth century and at the beginning of the sixteenth. In the accounts of St. Mary-at-Hill, in London, are to be found such entries as: "Received of William Blase, Barbowrez (*i.e.* the barber's) wife, for painting of an image of Our Lady within the Church—20*d.*," and many other examples have previously been given of sums left by deceased parishioners for special work in their parish churches, such as the erection or adornment of the rood or its loft. Bishop Hobhouse has noticed in the Somerset churchwardens' accounts that there was hardly any conceivable kind of property that was not handed over to the wardens for church purposes, either to produce income by being leased out, or to be sold for the benefit of the common exchequer. Live stock of every sort is represented—cows, oxen for ploughing, rams, sheep, lambs, bees, cocks and hens, geese, and even pigs are named. At Morebath almost every altar had its endowment of sheep, and at St. Mary's, in the city of Bath, there was a little flock managed by the wardens. In the former small parish there were no fewer than eight different accounts kept, and "a supernumerary body" of from three to nine parishioners were added to the wardens "as controllers of the parish stock." At Bromley, Margaret White, widow, who died in June, 1538, by her will gave to the church one hive of bees to support the light of All Hallows, one hive to support the light of the Sepulchre, and a third to the light of St. Anthony. Also to the keeping of her obit she gave two kine, and directed that the obit should be kept "out of the increase of the said kine," and her name placed on the bede-roll, and that Mass be said and bread and cheese and drink given to four poor people.

In other places gifts in kind appropriate to the locality, such as malt, barley, wheat, etc., appear on the roll of accounts. At Walberswick, in Suffolk, in 1451, one Thomas Comber handed over to the people's wardens 2500 herrings; another gave a set of fishing-nets. At Wigtoft, a village near Boston, "a long-ladder" was given to the church; whilst in the same place a parishioner, named Peter Salt-weller, paid a yearly rent of 1*s.* 4*d.* for a "salt pan," or pit for making salt, which had been given to the church.

Many of the gifts in kind were, of course, sold. Thus, for the Walberswick herrings the wardens obtained 1*s.*, and the set of fishing-nets brought in no less than 8*s.* 6*d.* In the same parish, in 1500, one John Almyngham left by will, dated October 7, a sum, large in those days, of £20 to his parish church. Ten pounds were to be expended by the wardens in purchasing "a peyer of organys." "Item with the residue," he says, "I will a canopy over the High Auter well done with Our Lady and four angels, and the Holy Ghost (probably a dove to contain the Blessed Sacrament) going up and down with a chain."

In 1483–4 the parishioners of St. Edmund's and St. Thomas's, Salisbury, contributed all kinds of articles to be the common goods of the parish, or else to be sold for what they would fetch. From the wife of a barber in the city there is recorded the present of "a brass dish and a plate." At another time, "for writing the names in the book," or bede-roll, one William Dyngyn gave to the wardens "a red girdle" ornamented "with silver and gold." One of the favourite gifts at this time for people to make to their churches was "a set of beads," or, to call it by the modern

name, "a rosary." Again and again this kind of gift is recorded, and so also is the sale of the same for the benefit of the common purse. For example, in the accounts of St. Mary the Great, Cambridge, may be seen numerous instances of this. In 1540, for example, there is entered the following—"*memorandum:* that at the feast of St. John the Baptist . . . a pair of silver beads and two other pair of corall, gauded with silver, were sold by the churchwardens to James, goldsmith of Saint Benet's parish . . . by the consent of most part of the parishioners." "Item the collar of baudryk of gold, having 9 links enamelled of gold, with the ouche of St. Nicholas and little monstre or Relic of St. Nicholas' oil, is taken from the custody of the churchwardens to be sold at Stourbridge fair by agreement and consent also of the parishioners." At Walberswick, to turn again to that parish for an example, in 1498 the wardens acknowledge the receipt of 4*s.* 4*d.* for "a pair of beads that were Margaret Middleton's." So, too, at Pilton, in Somerset, in 1515, one of the parishioners paid the churchwardens 10*d.* for a set of beads, which had been given them to dispose of; and at Yatton another pair "of amber" were sold for 7*d.*, which was credited to the common stock.

It is well to note, however, that gifts made for some special purpose, for a particular altar, or statue, etc., were not disposed of in the way described above, but were preserved, and the names of the donors were kept alive by means of the bede-rolls, which will be subsequently spoken about. What apparently the parishioners held that they had a right to sell for the common good of the parish, were gifts made with the donor's expressed or implied

intention that this should be done; and goods, plate, or vestments, which had been previously purchased by the parish, and which, as was held in those days, certainly could be sold to purchase other goods or ornaments, or to carry out some necessary parochial work.

Goods of all kinds, given for a special purpose and held by the churchwardens as trustees, were protected by ecclesiastical legislation. The Synod of Exeter, for example, in 1287, orders the wardens to keep all such presents in careful custody, to produce them when called upon by authority, and not to turn them to any other use than that for which they were originally given. This applies, the Constitution declares, to the revenues of chantries and altars, and even to the lights provided for them, and this property may never be alienated, except in case of some great necessity, when the leave of the archdeacon, or at any rate of the rector, must be first obtained.

The names of some few other parish collections may here be usefully recorded. *Dowelling*, or dwelling-house money, was a tax or rate levied for parochial purposes on each household—a church rate, in fact. This assessment was sometimes known as *smoke-money*, or *smoke-farthing*, meaning the contribution made from each family hearth or house. Sometimes this was evidently known as *Pentecostal*, and it then referred to the offerings made by the parishioners at Whitsuntide to the parish priest. "Pentecostal oblations," varying in amount from 1*s.* to 1*s.* 4*d.*, are entered for many years in the churchwardens' accounts of Aldworth, Berks. "Smoke-money," or "smoke-silver," is said also to have been a money payment made to the

parson in lieu of a tithe of wood; but the name certainly appears in some churchwardens' accounts as a contribution to the parish, and not to the priest. For instance, at Bromley, in 1527–8, "smoke-farthings" produced 14*s.* for the common parochial purse, and "dowelling-money" 9*s.* 3*d.* At Laverton, in Lincolnshire, each householder apparently gave 1½*d.* as his share of "smoke-money;" and at St. Edmund's and St. Thomas's, Salisbury, the tax was known as "smoke-silver," or "smoke-farthings."

At Easter time the churchwardens had to collect "Peter's pence," "Rome fardynges," "Rome's scot," or "Peter farthings," the contribution from each household to the Pope. It is well to remark, however, that it is obvious, from the accounts of this contribution to be found, that not more than 50 per cent. of the amount collected ever found its way into the papal coffers. The wardens collected the money and paid it to the archdeacon at the time of visitation. At St. Mary the Great, Cambridge, for example, they paid "at ye visytacion, for Rome Fardynges 22½*d.*" Great care was taken to secure the punctual payment of these dues to the Holy See, and warnings were issued when the parish was in arrears. For continual neglect to pay it was punished with interdict.

Lastly, there was another very general form of collection made by the churchwardens, called variously "wax-silver," "candle-silver," "Easter money," or "Paschal money." These were payments made in many parishes towards the annual expenses of the parish in finding candles and lamps to burn in the churches. In some places the amount paid by each parishioner was ½*d.* Besides the above, there were

various forms of contribution in different places; as, for example, special payments for "the holy loaf," or blessed bread. An examination of the various extant churchwardens' accounts will show that these officials were never at a loss to obtain money from their fellow-parishioners when they needed it for any special purpose. One great resource, which apparently never failed them, took the form of social meetings at the Church House, or elsewhere; but as to these gatherings more will have to be said in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER VII

THE PARISH CHURCH SERVICES

AS the church was from the earliest times the centre of the parish, and the priest the head of his flock and the chief person—the parson—of the district, it is natural to look for the first indications of all parochial life in the church itself. From the cradle to the grave, as it has often been said, through the clergy, religion extended its care to every soul, and exerted its influence over man, woman, and child in every parochial district, mainly by means of the Church services and the administration of the Christian Sacraments. In this and the following chapter it is proposed to examine the nature and extent of these influences in pre-Reformation parochial life.

Daily Mass.—In the first place it is proper to speak of the perpetual round of prayer and Eucharistic sacrifice known as the daily Mass. Archbishop Cranmer, in his works on the "Supper," testifies to the devotion of the people generally to their morning Mass. He represents them as "saying, 'This day have I seen my Maker;' and 'I cannot be quiet except I see my Maker once a day.'" The Mass was regarded, as the author of *Dives and Pauper* says, as "the highest prayer that holy church can devise for the salvation of the quick and

the dead," in which "the priest offereth up the highest sacrifice and the best offering that any heart can devise, that is Christ, God's Son in Heaven, under the form of bread and wine."

According to Lyndwood's gloss on Archbishop Peckham's Constitution, every priest in those days was supposed to offer up his Mass as frequently as possible, unless he was prevented by some bodily infirmity, or some personal and adequate reason made him abstain from daily celebration. In that case, very frequently, the parishioners would themselves provide for the morning Mass to be said by some paid chaplain. In one case, in the diocese of London, in the fourteenth century, the people seriously complain to their bishop that their vicar will not secure the services of a chaplain and a clerk, for whom they had agreed to pay, to give them Mass "every day."

At Henley-on-Thames, in 1482, "the Mayor and Commonalty" arranged that the priest of the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary should say Mass every day at 6 a.m., and the chantry priest of St. Katherine's at 8 o'clock. In large churches, where there were many chaplains and chantry priests, the Masses followed one another continuously: thus, for example, at Lincoln Cathedral the early morning Mass was said at 5 o'clock each day in St. Chad's Chapel, but the chaplain, whose duty it was to say it, was not bound to be at midnight Matins. The same may be said of Lichfield. The other daily Masses were to be each hour, from 6 a.m. till 10, when the High Mass was begun. After the consecration of this sung Mass, the last daily Mass, intended for travellers, was to be begun.

These early morning Masses were called by various names, of which "Morrow Mass" and "Jesu Mass" were the most common. In the Chantry Certificates a great number of entries of parcels of lands, etc., for the support of some daily Mass in the early morning, show how popular this service was in pre-Reformation days. In one place, in the county of Nottingham, the chantry suppressed is declared to have been founded for a priest "to say Mass every morning before sonne rysing, for such as be travellers by the way, and to maintain God's service there; which town is also a thoroughfare towne." At Barnards' Castle, the Guild of Holy Trinity paid for a priest "to say Mass daily at six o'clock in the morning, and to be resident at Matins, Mass, and Evensong, and to keep a free grammar school and a song school for all the children of the town." At Ipswich, "Mr. Alfrey's chantry was founded for a priest to sing the 'Morowe Mass,' in the parish church at St. Matthew;" whilst at Newark the chantry priest of St Mary Magdalene's had to say Mass for the people at 4 o'clock in the morning. Most of the instances recorded show that the "Morrow Mass," whether at daybreak or at 4 or 5 or 6 o'clock, was endowed by benefactors with the revenues of lands or tenements. Sometimes, however, the stipend of the priest was paid by money collected for the purpose from the parishioners. At Bury St. Edmunds, for instance, the greater part of the necessary money for the early-mass priest was "gathered wekely of the devotion of the parishioners." The churchwardens' accounts of St. Edmund's and St. Thomas's, Salisbury, show that a certain "fraternity" paid for a priest to say "the Morrow Masse of Jesus," they also paid

for a torch and 6 lbs. of tallow candles for "the said Morrowe Masse prest in Wynter." In the parish of St. Peter-Cheap, London, the Wardens paid the stipend for a curate to say Mass every morning at six o'clock, and the wages of a clerk to serve him.

At St. Martin's Outwich, London, the sum of 33*s.* 4*d.* was found each half-year as the reward of the priest who said the Morrow Mass. In 1472, one of the parishioners of St. Mary-at-Hill, London, left to the churchwardens of the church certain lands and houses to find a priest to say Mass daily, "immediately after the morowe masse, in the said church of St. Mary, to be sung, yf the morowe masse in the same chirche be continued as heretofore it was wont to be and now is used, or ellse in defaute of the same morowe masse, that my said Prieste syng daily reasonable tymely his masse in stede and tyme of the morrowe masse. . . ." Then, after saying that this chaplain will, of course, assist at all the church services, the donor adds: "also that the said Priest say every werkeday in the said Chirch of Seynt Mary atte hill, his matens, pryme and hours, evensong and complene and all his other prayers and services, by hymself or with his felowes preestes of the same chirch." In this church also the accounts show that the wardens paid one of the priests an extra fee of 5*s.* a quarter for taking the "Morowe Masse."

At St. Mary Woolnoth, to take but one more example, Symonde Eyre, sometime Mayor of London, and draper, established a fraternity of our Blessed Lady St. Mary the Virgin. There was to be a "Mass by note" and also "two psalms by note," one in honour of Our Lady, the other in honour of St. Thomas of Canterbury, to be sung by a priest,

clerk, and children. To pay for this he gave the tavern called the "Cardinal," etc. In 1492 the property was found not to be sufficient to support this, and another parishioner, Sir Hugh Bryce, alderman and goldsmith, left to the churchwardens other property to maintain this custom, namely, 6*s.* 8*d.* more to the priest, and 20*s.* "for that the clerk shall daily kepe an anthem or *Salve* before the Crucifix in the

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body of the said Church, with *Aves* of our Lady." The Masses are to be sung as follows: every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday a Mass of Our Lady; every Wednesday a "Missa de Requiem;" and every Friday a Mass "in honour of the glorious name of Jesus. . . ."

It may, then, be taken as certain that, generally speaking, Mass was celebrated daily in most of the parish churches. It is equally certain that this was fairly attended by those whose duties permitted them to be present. The *Prymer*

of 1538, in giving the duties of the week, thus speaks of Monday :—

"Monday men ought me for to call,
In which good werkes ought to begin;
Heryng masse, the first dede of all,
Intendyng to fle deadly syn."

So, too, *The Young Children's Book*, which is dated about A.D. 1500, takes for granted that those to whom the author addresses his lines will go to their morning Mass.

"Aryse be tyme oute of thi bedde,
And blysse thi brest and thi forhede,
Then wasche thi handes and thi face,
Keme thi hede, and aske God grace
The to helpe in all thi werkes;
Thou schall spede better what so thou confes,
Then go to ye chyrche, and here a masse."

Andrew Borde also, in his *Regyment*, says that after rising and dressing, "then great and noble men doth use to here Masse, and other men that can not do so, but must apply theyr busyness, doth serve God with some prayers, surrendrynge thankes to hym for hys manyfolde goodnes, with askynge mercye for theyr offences." In the Introduction to *The Lay Folks Mass Book* Canon Simons has gathered together a considerable number of authorities for holding that people were supposed to hear their daily Mass, with the exception of those "common people," who were employed on work and could only be present on the Sundays and holidays. In Wynkyn de Worde's *Boke of Kervynge*, the chamberlain is instructed "at morne" to "go to the chyrche or chapell to your soveraynes closet and laye carpentes and cuysshens and pute downe his boke of prayers, then drawe the curtynes."

And so, too, Robert of Gloucester says of William the Conqueror, reflecting the manners of the time in which he himself wrote: "In chyrche he was devout ynou, for hym non day abyde that he na hurde masse and matyns and evenson[g] and eche tyde." And Canon Simmons adds—

"But that the rule of the church was not a dead letter is perhaps most unmistakably shown by the matter-of-course way in which hearing mass before breaking fast is introduced as an incident in the everyday life of knights and other personages in works of fiction, which, nevertheless, in their details were no doubt true to the ordinary habits of the class they intended to portray. . . ."

For example, in *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, Gawayne, after the lady has kissed him—

"Dos hir forth at ye dore, with outen dyn more
And he ryches him to ryse and rapes hym sone,
Clepes to his chamberlayn, choses his wede
Bozez forth, quen he wate boun, blythely to Masse
And thenne he meued to his mete, that menskly hym keped."

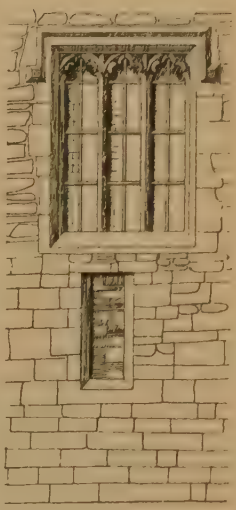
And so again the lord hears Mass before he eats, and goes hunting at daybreak—

"Ete a sop hastyly, when he hade herde Masse
With bugle to bent felde he buskez by-lyve."

The Venetian traveller, who at the beginning of the sixteenth century wrote his impressions of England, was struck by the way in which the people attended to their religious duties in this matter of morning Mass. "They all attend Mass every day, he writes, and say many *Paternosters* in public. The women carry long rosaries in their hands, and any who can read, take the Office of Our Lady with them, and with some companion recite it in church verse by verse,

in a low voice, after the manner of churchmen." This story of English people going to a daily Mass might perhaps be considered as one of the proverbially curious stories told even by otherwise intelligent strangers from foreign countries, were it not that it is confirmed by the assertion of another Venetian some years later. This latter declares that every morning "at daybreak he went to Mass arm-in-arm with some nobleman or other."

Even in the case of those whose business kept them from the church itself, it is probable that they were united in spirit to the great act of worship which was being offered in God's house, in their name as well as in that of all those present. The bell known as the Sanctus Bell, because it was rung at the saying of the Sanctus at the beginning of the Canon of the Mass, and also at, what was considered the most sacred time of the Sacrifice, the Consecration and Elevation of the Elements, was intended to give notice to those working in the fields or within reach of its sound, of these most solemn parts of the Mass. Sometimes this bell was set in the rood beam, sometimes in a turret rising from the chancel arch, and sometimes from the nave gable. Occasionally it was of considerable size; but apparently more frequently it was small, and rung by hand. Even then, however, according to some antiquaries, the clerk or server rang the hand-bell out of the low



LOW SIDE WINDOW, BARNARD CASTLE, DURHAM

side window, which is frequently still existing in parish churches, in order to warn people outside that the Mass was going on. That this was really the practice is hardly doubtful in view of a Constitution of Archbishop Peckham, in 1281. He directs in this, that "at the time of the Elevation of the body of Our Lord, a bell be rung on one side of the church (*in uno latere*), that the people who cannot be at daily Mass, no matter where they may be, whether in the fields or in their homes, may kneel down, and so gain the indulgences granted by many bishops" for this act of devotion.

The behaviour of the people in the church, and in particular during Mass time, was a matter upon which in mediæval times all were carefully instructed. Myrc, in his *Instructions for Parish Priests*, bids the clergy tell their parishioners that on entering the house of God they should leave outside "many wordes" and "ydel speche," that they should put away all vanity and "say their *Pater noster* and *Ave*." They are to be warned not to stand about or loll against the pillars or the wall, but kneel on the floor—

> "And pray to God wyth herte meke
> To give them grace and mercy eke."

When the Gospel is read they are to stand up and, blessing themselves at the *Gloria tibi, Domine*, they are to continue standing until the reading is finished, and then they are to kneel down again. When they hear the bell ring for the Consecration, all, "bothe young and olde," are to fall on their knees, and, holding up both their hands, pray softly to themselves thus :—

"Jesu, Lord, welcome Thou be
In form of bread as I Thee see.
Jesu! for Thy holy name
Shield me to-day from sin and shame," etc.,

or in some similar way. The most ordinary prayers to be used at this time, according to the books of religious instruction then in vogue, were the *Salve lux mundi:* "Hail, Light of the world, Word of the Father; Hail thou true Victim, the living and entire Flesh of God made true Man," and the *Anima Christi, sanctifica me,* supposed by many people to be a devotional prayer of more modern origin.

Besides attendance at the morning Mass, there is little evidence of any other ordinary daily use of the church. It would be altogether wrong, however, to conclude that God's house, standing open as it did all the day through, did not attract people to it for private and unrecorded devotion. One or two chance references in documents, such as "Proofs of age" and "Depositions," seem to point to the fact that the churches were, in fact, used during the day by people seeking Almighty God's guidance and help, by passing strangers, and by labourers returning from their daily toil. It has already been pointed out that in the case of a Chantry, the benefactor who founded it made it a condition that the priest should recite his Breviary in the church either by himself or with others. This practice was recommended to priests generally, and there is no reason to suppose that it was not carried out by them.

"Let all the Ministers of the Church," says Bishop Quevil, in 1287, "be diligent and careful in saying the Divine Office. In the name of the Holy Trinity we order every minister of the church

carefully, devoutly, clearly, and entirely, without any cutting down, to sing or say the night and day Divine Office appointed by General Council. Let those who chant it remember to pause in the middle of the verse, and let no one begin any verse before the other has finished the verse preceding." and, in regard specially to parish churches, the same Constitution ordered that "parish priests shall not leave their churches until on feast days and Holy days they shall have said the canonical hours either before or after Mass; and that no priest say his Mass before he has done his duty to his Creator by saying Matins and Prime."

In the same way, in 1364, the Synod of Ely, held by Bishop Simon Langham, ordered that priests were to say the whole office in their churches, and

"that all pastors of souls and parish priests, when they had finished the recitation of their Office in their churches, shall apply themselves diligently to prayer and the reading of Holy Scripture, in order that, by a knowledge of the Scriptures, they may be ready, as becomes their office, to satisfy any one who asks for the reason of their faith and hope. Let them ever be earnest in the teaching and the effect of Scripture in their work, like the poles in the rings of the ark of the covenant, so that their prayer may be nourished and rendered fruitful by assiduous reading as by their daily bread."

In some of the larger parish churches a considerable portion of the Divine Office, as well as the Mass, was sung daily. A note in the churchwardens' accounts of St. Michael's, Cornhill, London, written in 1538, asks prayers for "Richard Atfield, sometime parson of the church . . . for that he, with consent of the bishop, ordained and established Mattins, High Mass and Evensong to be sung daily, in the year 1375." This had been done regularly for 163 years, and the hours at which the various services were held would appear to have

been: Matins at 7 a.m., High Mass at 9, and Evensong on work-days at 2 p.m.

In many of the larger churches, also, benefactors or fraternities had arranged for the singing of a *Salve* or other anthem of Our Lady in the evening time at her altar or statue. At these times also tapers would usually be lit in honour of Christ's holy Mother. In the church of St. Mary-at-Hill, for example, in 1353, the practice existed, for in that year a parishioner left money to support a priest, and among his duties it is said "that he be every day in the same chirch after evensong, at the time of syngyng of *Salve Regina*, and that he sing the same, or else help the syngers after his cunnyng, in honour of our blessed lady the Virgin." At other places, as at St. Edmund's, Salisbury, for instance, the singing of the *Salve* was only undertaken at stated times. In this case the Fridays in Lent were apparently chosen for this evening hymn to Our Lady.

Chaucer, in *The Prioress's Tale*, makes a little boy, who doubtless had taken his part in this, ask his older school-fellow what another such anthem of Our Blessed Lady meant—the *Alma Redemptoris*.

"Noght wiste he what this Latin was to seye,
For he so yong and tendre was of age;
But on a day his felow gon he preye
T' expounden him this song in his longage,
Or telle him why this song was in usage.

* * * * *

"His felow, which that elder was than he,
Answerede him thus: 'This song, I have herd seye
Was maked of our blisful Lady free,
Hir to salue, and eek hir for to preye
To been our help and socour when we deye.'

* * * * *

"'And is this song maked in reverence
Of Christe's moder?' seyde this innocent:
'Now, certes, I wol do my diligence
To conne it all eer Christemasse is went.'"

Sunday in the Parish Church.—It is time to pass to the consideration of what took place in the mediæval parish church on the ordinary Sundays of the year. In the *Prymer* of 1538 are to be found some verses called *The Dayes of the Weke Moralysed*, in which the duty of the Christian in regard to Sunday is thus set forth :—

"I am Sonday ye honourable,
The hede of all the weke dayes.
That day all thyng labourable
Ought to rest and gyve lawd and prayers
To our Creatour, that alwayes
Wuolde have us rest after travayle
Man-servant and thy beeste he sayes
And the other or thyn avayle."

The first question that arises is as to the attendance of the people at the Matins which preceded the parochial Mass. It would seem to be quite certain that even in the smallest churches on Sundays and Holy days the Office was recited by the priests, or, in the cases where there was only one, by the priest and his clerk in the early morning. Further, from the various directions and instructions given to the people, it seems practically certain that they were not only expected to be at the Matins, but, as far as possible, were actually present at them.

The evidence of the various Visitations shows that even the smallest churches were expected to be provided by the rector with the Matin books. For example, in the Visitation

of churches in the diocese of Exeter, in 1440, there were constant notes as to the "*libri matutinales*" being in need of repair, or being "sufficiently good." In one case it is stated that the rector had built a new chancel, had done much to the rectory house, and had "provided good Matin books." In another the rector is said to have "hired a scribe to write new books." In the same diocese, in 1301, it was made an article of complaint, by the parishioners of Colebrooke, at the Visitation, that their vicar did not "sing Matins on the Greater Feasts with music" (*cum nota*), and that he "only said Mass every other day." The general orders for the provision of books for this service in the Constitutions of the English Church is sufficient evidence that the service was faithfully said or sung.

Myrc, in his *Instructions*, says that—

> "The holy day only ordeynet was
> To here goddes serves and the Mas.
> And spare that day in holynes
> And leve alle other bysynes."

And Langland, after saying that all business, hunting, and labour is to stop on the Lord's day, says, "And up-on Sonedays to cease—godes servyce to huyre, Bothe Matyns and Masse—and after mate, in churches to huyre here evesong, every man ought."

That this was really done, and moreover that the English practice was to go to the parish church and hear Matins before breaking the morning fast, appears in a passage of Sir Thomas More's writings.

"Some of us laymen," he says, "thinke it a payne ones in a weeke to ryse so soon fro sleepe, and some to tarry so long fasting,

as on the Sonday to com and hear out they Matins. And yet is not Matins in every parish, neyther, all thynge so early begonne norfully so longe in doyng, as it is in the Charterhouse, ye wot wel."

In a fifteenth-century book of instructions there are given as practical examples of the vice of sloth—

"When a man castis hym to leze in reste: to slepe mekell: to be long in bed, late comyng to God's service; havyng non savour nor swetnes in prechyng, nor in bedys byddyng, nor no devocyon in Matynes nor in Evesong."

It is somewhat difficult to obtain any exact information as to the time when Matins were said or sung in the English parochial churches. That the service was begun at an early hour we must suppose, even if we had not the authority of Sir Thomas More for the fact. To conclude from the case of St. Michael's, Cornhill, just quoted, it may be judged that the hour for Matins was at 6 or 7 in the morning, and that High Mass would commence at 9 or 10. An interval between was thus left, during which the parishioners would have time to return home and break their fast. If the occupation of two hours or so on a Sunday morning, and another service in the afternoon, may appear somewhat excessive to our modern notions, we must bear in mind that it was in those days clearly understood and accepted as a first principle of religion that the meaning of the Sunday rest and freedom from work was, in the first place, that the Christian, who was occupied all the rest of the week mainly in temporal affairs, might have time to attend to the things of his soul. His chief duty on the Sunday was, as one of the Synodical Constitutions puts it, "to hear divine service and Holy Mass,

to pray and to listen to the voice of the priest instructing him in his belief and duty."

The parochial, or High Mass, as the chief sung Mass was called, was preceded on each Sunday by the public and solemn blessing of the holy water. For this ceremony the priest, who was about to celebrate the Mass, came to the entrance of the chancel, accompanied by the deacon and subdeacon—if there were any such ministers; if not, by the clerks and servers carrying the platter of salt and the manual, and by the *aquæbajularius* holding the vat of water to be blessed. From the earliest times of English Christianity the people had been taught to use this water and salt mingled together with the Church's prayers, that by it they might be reminded of the purity of heart necessary to all God's servants, and that, by virtue of the power of God invoked in the prayers upon the water, His providence might watch over them and defend them from all danger of body and soul. Pope St. Gregory the Great had told St. Mellitus to bid our first apostle, St. Augustine, make use of the old pagan temples, having first caused "holy water (to) be blessed and sprinkled all over" them.

HOLY WATER VAT AND SPRINKLER

In the same way the English people were taught to make use of the water thus solemnly blessed on the Sunday in

their midst. As far back as the days of Archbishop Theodore, as appears in Thorpe's *Ancient Laws*, it was written: "Let the people sprinkle their houses with hallowed water as often as they wish." And in the porch of each parochial church a small niche contained some of the consecrated water, with which those coming to God's house signed themselves, the while whispering a prayer that they may be accepted as pure in the sight of the Most High.

On the Sunday, moreover, after the blessing was finished, the priest and his assistants came to the foot of the altar, which was sprinkled with newly blessed water. Then turning, he, in the same way, sprinkled each of the assistants as they passed before him, and, last of all, if there were no procession, he passed down the church casting the water upon each altar he came to, and upon the people gathered in the nave. If there was a procession, as seems generally to have been the case, the assistants and clerks, with the servers, followed the celebrant singing the anthems proper for the day. The parish processional cross was carried first, with two servers bearing candles, and with the thurifer and the clerk "water-bearer." In the smaller churches, when the weather permitted, no doubt the procession would wend its way outside, and pass along, followed by the people, amidst the graves of those former parishioners who had gone before, and who were taking their long rest in God's acre. It was during this Sunday visit, in all probability, that the living offered their prayers for their dead, and cast the blessed water upon their graves. Some of the wills of the fifteenth century show how this practice was prized. In one will, for instance, a citizen of York leaves a bequest to three priests

to say Masses for his soul, and asks that "each after his Mass should proceed to his grave, say a *De profundis* over it, and sprinkle it with holy water." Another citizen of the same city, and a merchant, provided for a priest to visit his grave daily and to cast the blessed water upon it.

To return to the procession. On coming back to the church, or, if there had been no procession, when the sprinkling of the church had been finished, the clergy and assistants in cathedrals, gathered round the celebrant in front of the great rood at the entrance of the choir for the *bidding prayer*. This was, in smaller parochial churches, however, given out from the pulpit after the Gospel of the Mass, and will be spoken of in connection with the Sunday sermon, to which a special chapter must be devoted.

It is unnecessary to follow the Sunday congregation of a pre-Reformation church through the singing of the parochial Mass. The church itself, as the bequests in the wills of the fifteenth century and other documents show, will have been gay with a profusion of candles burning on the rood beam, on the altars, and before each picture or shrine or image, whilst in many places the great "rowell," or candle-wheel, would have been lit up, and with its crown of candles have added to the general appearance of festivity, which the people of mediæval England loved so much to see in their churches.

At the end of the Mass a loaf of bread, called the "holy loaf," or "holy bread," was brought into the chancel, and, after being blessed by the priest, was cut into small pieces and distributed to the people. Then all came up to the chancel steps and received the morsel from the celebrant, whose hands they kissed. This blessed bread signified the fraternal

love that always ought to bind Christians together, and the practice of distributing it at the principal Sunday Mass continued until the religious changes in the reign of Edward IV. That the custom should be restored to them was one of the demands of the Devonshire insurgents in that reign. The churchwardens' accounts contain many references to this pious practice: the purchase of baskets for the distribution of the bread, for instance, is recorded at St. Michael's, Cornhill, St. Mary the Great, Cambridge, at Cratfield, and elsewhere. At Bromley, in Surrey, the churchwardens collected from the people the money to furnish the bread. In 1523, for instance, they acknowledge a collection of 2*s.* for this purpose, and double that amount the following year. Evidently, however, the custom which still prevails in France, of families taking it in turn to give the bread to be blessed, was not unknown in England in pre-Reformation days. Dr. Rock quotes from some churchwardens' accounts of Stamford-in-the-Vale, Berks, to show that the custom was revived in Queen Mary's days. A piece of land there, "called Gander's," provided at least a portion of the expense.

"The whole value of the chargis," says the document, "comyth to 2½*d.* and it is thus divided. They offer to the curatis hand too penyworth of bread with halfepeny candull—brought uppe to the preste at the highe altar. Of the too penyworthe of breade they reserve a halfepenny lofe whole for to be delyvered to the next that shul geve the holy lofe, for a knowledge to prepare against the Sonneday followyng."

The remainder of the Sunday, with the exception of the time—from half an hour to three-quarters—spent in taking

part in the Evensong or Vespers, which were probably sung about two or three o'clock in the afternoon, was devoted to rest and reasonable recreation, about which something will be said in a subsequent chapter. For the priest Sunday was the day when by law he had to visit the aged, infirm, and sick in his parish. "Let the priests," says the Constitution of Gilbert, Bishop of Chichester, in 1289, "see the sick every Sunday and feast day, and let them visit them with diligence. Let them take heed that they make no difficulty about attending to the sick at whatever hour they may be asked for." This same order is repeated in the Constitutions for the Province of York in 1518, more than two centuries after.

From the earliest times work was prohibited on Sundays and holy days. Lyndwood, in his gloss on the Constitution of Archbishop Chicheley prohibiting on such days "all servile work in any city or place of the Province of Canterbury," explains at some length the nature of the prohibition. When the work was genuinely necessary, as might be in the case of a barber, or a blacksmith, or a cook, then it was excused by the necessity, and did not come under the law. But where the work could be done on another day, or could have been easily anticipated or postponed, then it was prohibited by ecclesiastical law. This applied to the fairs and markets, which were so often held on feast days, and which the authorities in the fourteenth century were so much concerned to suppress, and the prohibition affected as well those who sold as those who bought at them. The Constitution of John Thoresby, Archbishop of York in 1367, was the first order against the growing practice of holding

markets and fairs on the Sundays, and the misuse of the cemeteries in this respect. The following year Archbishop Simon Langham sent out a general monition for the Province of Canterbury, and a special prohibition against certain abuses in the Isle of Sheppey, where, "for the noise of the people, the solemnities of the Mass in the church" were disturbed, and where, on account of the attraction of the market, people were induced to neglect their duty of being present at the Divine Service. The prohibition against selling and purchasing, however, did not apply to the ordinary necessaries of life, as bread, meat, etc., so long as the sale or purchase did not interfere with the religious obligations of the parties, and did not prevent them from going to church.

In another place the same canonist states, as he says, "briefly," what kind of work was to be considered "servile," and as such was prohibited to the people in mediæval England. This includes all mechanical, agricultural, and mercantile work, as well as the holding of courts or legal inquiries of every kind, unless "reasonable necessity or charity" required that any such work should be undertaken. In the cause of charity, however, it was held to be lawful on the holy days to assist to till, etc., the lands of the really poor, after all religious duties had been fulfilled. The obligation of resting from servile work on the Sunday or festival was reckoned from the Vesper hour on the Saturday, or the eve.

The instruction given to the people as to servile work was very clear and well understood. In *Dives and Pauper* it is thus put:—

"Every deadly sin is servile work, and such servile work God defendeth every day, but most on the Holy day. For he that doth deadly sin on the Holy day he doth double sin, for he doth sin and thereto he breaketh the Holy day against God's precept. Also servile work is called every bodily work done principally for lucre and worldly winning, as buying, selling, sowing, mowing, reaping, and all craft of worldly winning, also markets, fairs, sitting of Justices and of Judges, shedding of blood and execution, of punishing by law, and all works that should draw men from God's service. Nevertheless, if sowing, reaping, mowing, carting, and such other needful works (are done) purely for alms, and only for heaven made, and for need of them that they are done to on holy days, then are they not servile works nor the holy day broken thereby. Nevertheless, on Sundays and great feasts, such works should not be done, but if great need compel men thereto and deeds of great charity."

Then, after saying that certain tradesmen and merchants are permitted the preparation of wares and foods that must be ready on the Monday, the author of *Dives and Pauper* proceeds: "Also messengers, pilgrims, and wayfarers that might well rest without great harm are excused, so that they do their duty to hear Matins and Mass, if they mown, for long abyding in many journeys is costful and perilous." Any tendency to grow slack in the observance of the Sunday was noted, and strictly repressed by the authorities. In one instance a bishop directs the priest to put a stop to the shoemakers in his parish working on the Lord's day, as he has heard they did; in another an inquiry is ordered upon a denunciation being made against an individual; and in a third a parson is directed to denounce a parishioner from the pulpit for having been proved to have worked without reason on a holy day.

Before concluding this brief sketch of the Sunday and week-day in an English mediæval parish from the point of view of religion, notice must be taken of one regular feature of that life—the Angelus. The Angelus bell, the Ave bell, or the Gabriel bell, as it was variously called in England, probably grew out of the Curfew, which originally was a civil notification of the time to extinguish all lights; but in the thirteenth century it was turned into a universal religious ceremony in honour of Our Lord's Incarnation and of His Blessed Mother. In 1347 Ralph de Salopia, Bishop of Bath and Wells, desired the cathedral clergy to say, the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night, five *Aves* for all benefactors living or dead. Some few years before that time, Pope John XXII. had urged the habit of saying three *Aves* at Curfew time. The practice soon spread to England, and grew as it spread, and Archbishop Arundel of Canterbury, in 1399, at the earnest request of King Henry IV., ordered the usage of saluting the Mother of God the first thing in the early morning and the last thing at night, to be universally adopted in the province—"at day-break and at the Curfew," and the bell that was then rung was called by our English ancestors the "Gabriel Bell," in memory of that archangel's salutation of Our Blessed Lady. By a fortunate chance we are able to know the actual time at which this Angelus bell was rung, for a casual note in a Bury St. Edmund's book gives the times of the tolling in that city as at 4 a.m. and 9 p.m. in summer, and 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. in the winter.

Of this religious ceremony a writer says—

"In accordance with a practice of the Early Church at morning

and evening, the Angelus bell, as it was called," pealed "forth from every steeple and bell-turret in the Kingdom, and as the sound floated through the surrounding neighbourhood, the monk in his cell, the baron in his hall, the village maiden in her cottage, and the labourer in the field, reverently knelt and recited the allotted prayer in remembrance of Christ's Incarnation for us."

CHAPTER VIII

CHURCH FESTIVALS

THE round of Church festivals was followed with a lively interest by the people of every English parish. From Advent to Advent the sequence of ecclesiastical feasts was calculated to bring before the minds of practical Christians the great drama of the Redemption of mankind; and the joyous participation of the people in the various celebrations was outwardly marked by the decoration of their churches for the greater solemnities with hangings and banners, with garlands of flowers, and with the multitude of lights which on those days were set burning before altars and statues.

The ecclesiastical year began always with *Advent*—the time of preparation for the coming of our Lord into the world, when the old-world yearning of the nations for the promised Redeemer was ever brought prominently by the Church before the Christian people in the words of the liturgy, from the *Ad Te levavi*, "To Thee have I lifted up mine eyes," of the Introit for the first Sunday, to the *Hodie scietis*, "Know ye to-day that the Lord will come, and will bring you salvation," of the Christmas Eve. In a fifteenth-century English book of *Instructions for Parish Priests*, it is said that fasting during Advent was counselled, though

not ordered by the Church. The Church of Rome kept this practice of preparing strictly for the festival of Christmas, and priests, in the opinion of the writer, ought to follow this example. Lay people were free of any obligation, but those who intended to receive Holy Communion on the Nativity were to be strongly urged to prepare by this salutary fasting. The festival of Christmas was celebrated with the customary three Masses—the first at midnight, preceded by Matins; the second in the early morning; and the third at the usual time of nine or ten. In many places in the time of Christmas, a religious play suitable to the season enlivened the winter evenings, and impressed on the minds of the people the chief incidents in the history of our Lord's birth. The coming of the Kings on the Epiphany was also a subject lending itself to picturesque illustration, which never failed to delight the simple-minded parish audience of pre-Reformation days. At Great Yarmouth, year after year, the people kept the *Feast of the Star;* and such entries occur in the accounts as "for making a new Star," "for leading the Star," "for a new balk-line to the Star, and ryving the same." Manship, in his *History* of that town, says that "in the chancel aisles were performed those sacred dramas intended to give the people a living representation of the leading occurrences narrated in Holy Writ, and of the principal events in our Lord's life."

On the feast of Holy Innocents, or, as it was called frequently, "Childermas," there was kept a feast which may seem somewhat strange to our notions, but which our forefathers evidently loved well. It was the festival of the boy-bishop, attended by his youthful ministers. Sometimes the

celebration was associated with the name of St. Nicholas, and was thus kept on December 6th, rather than on the 28th; but the method of the festival was the same. Dr. Rock, in *The Church of our Fathers*, has described this pageant for us. In every cathedral, collegiate, and parish church the boys of the place—and in those days every little boy either sang or served about the altar at church—met together on the eve of the feast, and chose of their number a "St. Nicholas and his clerks." This boy-bishop and his ministers then sang the first Vespers of the Saint, and in the evening walked all round the parish making collections for their feast. All who could afford it asked them into their houses and made them presents of various kinds. In 1299 Edward I., for instance, attended Vespers in his chapel at Heton, near Newcastle-on-Tyne, at which the "boy-bishop" and his fellows sang, and he gave them 40*s.* for singing before him; and the *Northumberland Household Book* tells us that "My Lord useth and accustomyth to gyfe yerly, upon Saynt Nicolas—even, if he kepe chapell for Saynt Nicolas, to the mester of his children of his chapell for one of the childeren of his chapell, yerely 6*s.* 8*d.*"

It was upon this feast that, in memory of the Holy Innocents, some father of a family in the parish would make an entertainment for his children, and invite those of his neighbours to join in the festivities. In such a case, of course, the "Nicholas and his clerks" sat in the most honoured place. The *Golden Legend* relates a story illustrating the practice: "A man, for the love of his sone that wente to scole for to lerne, halowed every year the fest of Saynt Nicholas moche solemnly. On a tyme it happed that

the fader had doo make redy the dyner, and called many clerkes to this diner."

It was, however, on Holy Innocents' day that the boy-bishop, chosen on the feast of St. Nicholas, played his part in a set of pontificals provided for him. At St. Paul's, at York Minster, and at Lincoln, we find recorded in the inventories pontificals provided for his use. In the parish church of St. Mary-at-Hill, in London, the churchwardens paid for "a myter for a bysshop at St. Nicholas tyde." At this parish church, too, there was a store of copes, a mitre, and a crosier for the boy-bishop; whilst at St. Mary's, Sandwich, the inventory contains "a lytyll chasebyll for Seynt Nicholas bysschop," and at York there were "nine copes" for the boy attendants.

On the feast of Holy Innocents the boy-bishop was frequently expected to preach a sermon, which had been written for him. One such, written for a boy in St. Paul's school by Erasmus, is still extant. Until Archbishop Peckham's day the "little Nicholas and his clerks" used to take a conspicuous place in the services of the church during the octave of the feast, but in 1279 that prelate decreed that the celebration should be confined to the one day of the feast only. That this feast was popular, and that our forefathers delighted in coming to their parish churches to witness their children associated in this ceremonial around God's altar, may be judged from the statute of Roger de Mortival, Bishop of Sarum in 1319, in which he forbids too much treating of the children, and orders that the crowd at the procession are not to hustle or hinder the boys as they do their ceremonies.

Hardly had the festivals connected with Christmas been celebrated, than on the second day of February the *Feast of the Purification*, known as *Candlemas Day*, was kept. From the earliest times our English forefathers gathered together in their parish churches on that day, for the blessing of the candles and for the procession with lighted tapers, as the symbols of the burning love of their hearts for Christ, and in memory of the presentation of our Blessed Lord in the Temple. Ælfric, the Saxon homilist, speaks of the feast in his days, and the celebration remained the same till the change of religion.

"Be it known also to every one," he says, "that it is appointed in the ecclesiastical observances, that we on this day bear our lights to church and let them there be blessed: and that we should go afterwards with the light among God's houses and sing the hymn that is thereto appointed. Though some men cannot sing, they can, nevertheless, bear the light in their hands; for on this day was Christ the true light borne to the temple, Who redeemed us from darkness, and bringeth us to the Eternal Light, who liveth and ruleth for ever."

Ash Wednesday.—The great fast of Lent, which was a time devoted to penance for sins, and in which sorrow for offences was increased by the continual memory of Christ's suffering and death for mankind, was ushered in by what was known as *Shrove-tide*. This was the week that followed *Quinquagesima* Sunday, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. As its name imports, it was the time when Christians were urged to prepare their souls for the weeks of Lenten penance by confessing their sins to God through their parish priest,

or, as they said, shriving themselves. "Now is a clean and holy tide drawing nigh," said a homilist, "in which we should make amends for our heedlessness; let, therefore, every Christian man come unto his confessor, and confess his secret guilt."

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

On *Ash Wednesday* in each parish church, before the celebration of Mass, ashes were blessed, and each man, woman, and child came and knelt before their priest to have them strewn upon their heads, whilst his words reminded them that they "were dust, and unto dust they

would return." After the distribution of the ashes, according to an ancient English custom, if there were another church in the same district, all the people went to it in procession, and, having made there "a stay," or *statio*, for prayer, returned to their own church for Mass. With Ash Wednesday began the strict fast of Lent, which had to be kept on all days except Sundays; and even then no meat was permitted. On the week-days the fast was not allowed to be broken till after Mass and Vespers had been said in the parish church; that is, before eleven or twelve o'clock. The Anglo-Saxon *Ecclesiastical Institutes* speaks of those days of Lent as "the tithing-days of the year," which all good Christians should render to God most strictly. "Every Sunday at this holy tide," says the same authority, "people should go to housel," a practice which was not preserved in the later middle ages. The time of Lent was also known as the "holy time," and unnecessary and distracting business was as far as possible avoided. Thus, for instance, the assizes were prohibited during the whole period.

The Lenten Curtain.—From the evening before the first Sunday of Lent till the Thursday before Easter, what was known as the "Lenten curtain," or "Lenten veil," hung down in all parish churches between the chancel and the nave. It was one of the "ornaments" which the parishioners were bound to provide, and the churchwardens' accounts contain many references to it, both as to its provision and as to the expenses of erection. It was made of white stuff or linen, and hid the sanctuary from the people, except at the reading of the Gospel and until the *Orate Fratres*, when it was pulled aside. It was also drawn back on all feast

days kept during Lent. The order that the confessions of women should be heard "outside the veil," in the sight of all but out of hearing, refers to the Lenten veil. "The veil," says the *Liber Festivalis*, "that all the Lent has been drawn between the altar and the choir betokeneth the prophecy of Christ's Passion, which was hidden and unknown till these days." But in these three last days of Holy Week it "is done away (with), and the altar openly schowed to all men; for on these days Christ suffered openly His Passion."

Upon the first Monday in Lent all the crucifixes and images of every kind, both large and small, were covered with white cloths; or in the case of those niches which had their own wooden doors, these were closed till the eve of Easter. The linen or silk coverings were worked or painted with a red cross, and the "red cross" had its peculiar significance in the ritual of the English Church. The procession on each Sunday in Lent was not allowed to be headed by the ordinary *Crux processionalis*, but a wooden cross painted red, in reference to the shedding of our Lord's blood upon the cross in the throes of His crucifixion, was substituted for it. That the practice had a special meaning to our forefathers seems to be the case, since Sir Thomas More walked to execution, as Cresacre More says, "carrying in his hands a red cross." Langland, too, in his vision makes "Conscience" say that

> "These aren Cristes armes.
> Hus colours and hus cote-armure, and he that cometh so blody,
> Hit is Crist with his crois, conqueror of crystine."

PALM SUNDAY.—The dramatic ceremonies of Holy Week commenced with those of Palm Sunday. "This week now

begun," says an old fifteenth-century writer, "is called *penosa*, because people, in this more than in any other week, keep their sins before their minds, and mortify themselves in their sorrow." From the earliest times, as Aelfric tells us, it was the custom in England on this Sunday that "the priest should bless palm-twigs and distribute them so blessed to the people," and that then the people should go forth in procession with him, singing the "hymn which the Jewish people sang before Christ when He was approaching to His Passion." The so-called "palms" in England were probably willow, box, and yew, charges for which appear in the churchwardens' accounts. In fact, one sixteenth-century authority states that the yew trees so frequently to be found in the neighbourhood of churches were planted in the churchyards of England to furnish the yew-branches which usually served for palms on Palm Sunday.

Dr. Rock thus describes the procession and other ceremonies in the first part of the service on this day—

"In many parts of the country a large and splendidly ornamented tent was set up at the furthermost end of the close or burial-ground, and thither, early in service time, was carried by two priests, accompanied with lights, a sort of beautiful shrine of open work, within which hung the Blessed Sacrament, enclosed in a rich cup or pix. The long-drawn procession, gay and gladsome with its palms and flowers, went forth, and halted now and then, as it winded round the outside of the church to make a station. While they were going from the North side towards the East, and had just ended the Gospel read at the first of these stations, the shrine with the Sacrament," borne by priests under a canopy, "surrounded with lights in lanterns and streaming banners, and preceded by a silver cross and by a thurifer with incense, was borne forward, so that they might meet it as

it were; and our Lord was hailed by the singers chanting *En rex venit mansuetus.* Kneeling lowly down and kissing the ground, they saluted the Sacrament again and again, in many appropriate sentences out of Holy Writ; and the red cross withdrew from the presence of the silver crucifix."

The procession then moved forward in parish churches to the churchyard cross, where it halted, and there, falling down, all, priests and people, worshipped Him who had died on the cross for the sins of men. Then palms and flowers were strewn round about it, and after the Passion had been read, palms were brought and the churchyard cross was wreathed as for a victory, in memory of Christ's triumph over death.

From the cross the procession now went to the closed door of the church for the singing of the *Gloria laus*—the joyous imitation of the hymns the Jews sung on that day when bringing our Saviour to the gates of Jerusalem. When this part of the ceremony was ended, the church doors flew open, and the priests who bore the shrine with the Blessed Sacrament, held their sacred burden aloft in the doorway, "so that all who went in had to go under this shrine, and in this way the procession came back into the church, each one bowing his head in token of reverence and obedience" as he passed beneath the Sacrament.

The fourth and last "station" of the Palm Sunday procession was held before the great Rood, from which the large curtain, which all Lent had hidden the figure of the crucified Saviour, was now drawn aside. At the sight of the crucifix the celebrant and his assistants, together with all the people, knelt and saluted it thrice with the words *Ave Rex noster, fili David, Redemptor.* A fifteenth-century preacher, giving only

a brief instruction on this day, because, as he notes, of the length of the service, says—

"Holy Church this day in a sollempne procession makes in mynd of that procession of our Lord to Jerusalem. . . . And as they songen and diden worship to Christ in ther procession, rythe so we this day worchep the crosse in our procession, thries kneeling to the cross in worchep, in ye mynde of Hym that was for us done on the crosse, and we welcome Him with songe in the chirch as they welcomed Him to the citie Jerusalem."

The true inward meaning of this great act of worship done to the cross at this time was carefully taught to the people. The author of *Dives and Pauper* has the passage which follows, about the worship of the Rood on Palm Sunday—

"*Dives.*—On Palm Sunday at the procession the priest draweth up the veil before the rode and falleth down to the ground with all the people, and sayeth thrice thus: '*Ave Rex noster*'—'Hail be Thou our King,' and so he worships the thing as King.

"*Pauper.*—*Absit!* God forbid! He speaks not to the image that the carpenter hath made and the painter painted, unless the priest be a fool; for the stock and stone was never King; but he speaketh to Him that died upon the cross for us all—to Him that is King of all things."

For this and the other ceremonies of Holy Week in many parishes additional help was, if possible, obtained by the clergy and people, and the churchwardens' accounts frequently show items of expense under this head. In one case we have the sum of 8*d.* charged for "the old friar who came to sing for the parish." At St. Michael's, Cornhill, the wardens paid for "two clerks for singing" at this time; and at St. Peter

Cheap, in 1447, there is an entry: Item—payde on Palme Sundaye for bread and wine to the readers of the Passion, 3*d.*" This refers, of course, to the chanting of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which took place during the Mass, that on this day followed the unveiling of the Rood. Before evensong on Palm Sunday the great crucifix was again covered with the veil, and it so remained hidden until the morning service of Good Friday.

TENEBRÆ.—"On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday you shall come," says a fourteenth-century writer, "to Matins, which we call *tenebræ*." At this service a triangular candlestick with twenty-five candles was placed in the choir. This candle-stand was called in England the "tenebræ," or Lenten "herse," and it is so named in many church accounts. It was one of the ornaments which had to be paid for by the parish, and it was sometimes known as the "Judas" candle.

In a sermon intended to explain the meaning of the peculiar ceremonies of "tenebræ," the preacher says—

"God men and wymine, as ye see theise thre days for to service ye go in ye evontyde in darknesse. Wherfore hit is callyd with you 'tenabulles;' but holy churche calleth hit *tenebras*, that is to say, 'derknesse.' Than why this service is done in darkness holy fathers wrytuth to us thre skylles." Then, after giving these reasons, he continues, "Wherefore to this service is no bell irongon, bot a sownde makuth of tre, whereby uche criston man and woman is enformede for to comon to this service withowtyn noyse makyng, and alle that thei spek on going, shall sown of ye tree that Cryste was done onne. Also at this service is sette on herce with candulles brennyng aftur as ye use is, yn some place more, yn some place lesse, the which bene quenchyt uch one after othur in showing how Christes discipules stolne from hym. Yet when all be quenched one levyth

leight, the which is borne away a wyle yt the clerkes syngone hymis and ye versus, ye which betokeneth ye whymmen yt made lamentation at Crystus Sepulcur. . . . Then aftur this, ye candul is brougt agayne and all othur at that ben lygte; ye which betokeneth that Christus y^{t} was for a gwile dede and hid in hys sepulchre, but soon aftur he was from dethe to lyfe and gave the lyghte of lyfe to all them that weren quenchud. . . .

"The strokys that ye prestes geveth on the boke betokynneth the clappus of thunder yt Christ brake helle gattys wyth when he com thedur and spoylud helle."

MAUNDY, OR SHEER THURSDAY. — On Thursday in Holy Week was commemorated the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist by our Lord in His last Supper. The *Liber Festivalis* makes the following explanation of the feast, for the benefit of those who ask for the reason of such things—

"First if men aske why *Schere* Thursday is so called, say y^{t} in holy churche it is called Our Lord's Soper day. For that day he soupud with hys disciple oponly. . . . Hit is also in English tong 'Schere Thursday,' for in owr elde fadur days men wold on y^{t} day makon scheron hem honest, and dode here hedes ond clypon here berdes and poll here hedes, ond so makon hem honest agen Estur day; for on ye moro (Good Friday) yei woldon done here bodies non ease, but suffur penaunce, in mynde of Hym y^{t} suffrud so harte for hem. On Saturday they myghte mote whyle, whate for longe service, what for other occupacion that they haddon for the wake comynge and after mote was no tyme for haly daye. . . . Therefore, as John Belette telluth and techuth, on 'Schere Thursday' a man shall dodun his heres and clypponde his berde, and a prest schal schave his crowne so that there schall no thynge bene betwene God Almythy and hym."

The Maundy.—On this day in all cathedral churches, in the greater parish churches, and even in some of the smaller

ones, the feet of thirteen poor people were washed with great solemnity, and they were fed and served at their meal by the dignitaries of the place, in memory of our Lord's act of humility in washing the feet of His disciples. This "Maundy" was kept also in England by kings and nobles, and even by private individuals, who on this day entertained Christ's poor in their houses.

The Absolution.—Thursday in Holy Week was also known to our forefathers as "absolution day," because, after tenebræ, in the evening, in larger churches, the people knelt before the penitentiary in acknowledgment of their repentance of sin, and received from him a token of God's acceptance by a rod being placed on their heads. Sometimes this voluntary humiliation and discipline was performed on Good Friday, and the rods touched the hands of the penitent. It was to this rite Sir Thomas More refers in his book against Tyndall, where he says—

"Tyndale is as lothe, good, tender pernell, to take a lyttle penaunce of the prieste, as the lady was to come any more to dyspelying that wept even for tender heart twoo dayes after when she talked of it, that the priest had on Good Friday with the dyspelyng rodde beaten her hard on her lylye white hands."

The church accounts sometimes refer to the purchase of rods for this purpose by the wardens.

The Sepulchre.—The service of Maundy Thursday morning included the consecration of two hosts, besides that which the celebrant received at the Communion of the Mass. At the conclusion of the service these two hosts were carried to some becoming place till the following day, when one was used in the Mass of the Presanctified, and the other was

placed in a pyx and put along with the cross, which had just been kissed and venerated, into what was known as the "Easter Sepulchre." On the afternoon of Good Friday it was customary for people in the towns to make visits to the various churches to pray at these sepulchres. There is no expense more constantly recorded in all the parochial accounts than that for the erection and taking down of the Easter Sepulchre. Generally, no doubt, it was a more or less elaborate, although temporary, erection of wood, hung over with the most precious curtains and hangings which the church possessed, some of which were even frequently left for this special purpose. Here in this "chapel of repose" the Blessed Sacrament was placed at the conclusion of the Mass of the Presanctified, and here the priest and people watched and prayed before it till early in the morning of Easter day.

EASTER SEPULCHRE, ARNOLD, NOTTS

There are, however, in England some interesting instances of permanent "tombs" being erected to serve as the

Easter Sepulchre. Some people in their wills left money to have a structure for the "altar of repose," worthy of its purpose, built over the spot on which they themselves desired to be buried.

After the morning service of Maundy Thursday, the high altar, and then all the altars in the church, were stripped of their ornaments and cloths and were left bare, in memory of the way our Blessed Lord was stripped of His garments before His crucifixion. In the evening of the same day all the altars were washed with wine and blessed water, the minister saying at each the prayer of the Saint to whom the altar was dedicated; then he and all the clerks, having devoutly kissed the stone slab, retired in silence.

GOOD FRIDAY.—The chief feature in the morning service of Good Friday was undoubtedly the "adoration of the Cross" and the ceremonial kissing of it, better known in England as the "Creeping to the Cross." The meaning of this act of worship is set out in *Dives and Pauper* so clearly that there can be no doubt as to what our forefathers intended by it.

"*Pauper.*—In the same manner lewd men should do their worship before the thing, making his prayer before the thing and not to the thing.

"*Dives.*—On the other hand, on Good Friday above all in holy Church men creep to the church and worship the cross.

"*Pauper.*—That is so, but not as thou meanest: the cross that we creep to and worship so highly that time is Christ himself that died on the cross that day for our sins and our sake. For the shape of man is a cross, and as He hung upon the rood He was a very cross. He is that cross, as all doctors say, to whom we pray and say, *Ave crux, spes unica*—'Hail be thou Cross, our only hope,' etc.

And as Bede saith; for as much as Christ was most despised of mankind on Good Fryday, therefore Holy Church hath ordeyned that on the Good Fryday men should do Him that great high worship that day, not to the crosse that the priest holdeth in his hand, but to Hym that died for us all that day upon the crosse."

Archbishop Simon Mepham (1327–1333) issued a special Constitution as to the way in which this solemn day was to be kept throughout England.

"We order and ordain," he says, "that this holy day of Good Friday, on which our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ after many stripes laid down His precious life on the Cross for the salvation of men, according to the custom of the Church should be passed in reading, silence, prayer and fasting with tearful sorrow."

For which reason this Synod forbade all servile work on this great day; the archbishop adding, however, that this did not apply to the poor, and that the rich might show their charity to the poor by aiding them in work upon their land. The canonist Lyndwood points out, in commenting on this provision, that by "silence" the archbishop probably intends to prohibit all shouting or noise, all loud talking or disputes, which might interfere with the solemnity of this commemoration.

Holy Saturday.—The service of this day probably began at a late hour, as, according to primitive custom, it was the Office of a Vigil. The first act in the long Office was the blessing of the new fire, which had previously been struck by a steel out of flint. After a candle had been lit at the new fire, the procession passed from outside the western door, where this first portion of the ceremony had

been held, into the church for the blessing of the *Paschal Candle*. The preparation of this symbol of "the risen Lord," with the five glorified grains of incense, to remind all of His five sacred wounds, was one of the yearly parochial works. The charges for it are to be found in every book of church accounts: money was collected for the purpose, people gave presents towards it, and in some places—at St. Dunstan's, Canterbury, for instance—goods in kind were placed in the hands of the wardens, in order that the hiring-out of them might pay for the annual "paschal." To this practice of having their annual "paschal," the people clung somewhat tenaciously on the change of religion; and as late as 1586, at Great Yarmouth, charges were made by the churchwardens for taking down and putting up "the Paschal."

The *Paschal*, apparently, was commonly a lofty construction: a tall thick piece of wood painted to represent a candle, and ornamented, rested in the socket of the candlestick, and on the top of this, at a great height, was the real candle. For some reason not known, the wooden part was called by our English ancestors the "Judas of the Paschal." On this day also, in every parish church, the font was hallowed with impressive and symbolic ceremonies.

EASTER DAY.—"On this day," says an English fourteenth-century sermon book—"on this day all the people receive the Holy Communion." This was apparently the universal custom; and although in preparation for this Easter duty the parishioners were advised to go to their parish priest at the beginning of Lent, there are indications that during the last days of Holy Week there was sometimes a

press of penitents. At St Mary's, Dover, for example, in 1538 and 1539, the churchwardens enter in their expenses, "Item—paid to two priests at Easter to help shrive—2s." And in 1540 the entry runs, "Item—paid to three priests to help shrive and to minister on Maundy Thursday, Easter even, and Easter day, 2s. 4d."

Early in the morning of Easter, at the first streak of dawn, the people hastened to the church to be present when the Blessed Sacrament was brought by the priests from the sepulchre to the usual place where it hung over the altar. Sometimes the image of our Lord, which had been placed with it in the figurative tomb of the Easter sepulchre, was made movable, and on Easter day was placed on the altar in a standing position. This probably was the case at St. Mary's, Cambridge, where in 1557 the churchwardens paid "for mending of the Vice for the Resurrection." Generally, however, the crucifix was brought out of the place of repose and taken to some side altar, and there once more, as on Good Friday, all clergy and people knelt to honour it and kiss it. This was the practice in many large churches, and a description of the "Resurrection figure" is given in the *Rites of Durham*.

"There was in the Abbye church of Durresme,' says the writer, "a very solemn service uppon Easter day, betweene three and four of the clocke in the morninge in honour of the Resurrection, where two of the eldest monkes came to the sepulchre, being sett upp upon Good Friday after the Passion, all covered with red velvett and embroidered with gold, and then did sence it, other monke with a pax of silver sencers setting on their knees before the Sepulchre. Then they both rising came to the sepulchre, out of the which

with great devotion and reverence, they tooke a marvelous beautiful image of our Saviour, representing the Resurrection, with a crose in his hand, in the breast whereof was enclosed in bright christall the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, through the which christall the Blessed Host was conspicuous to the beholders. Then, after the elevation of the said picture, carryed by the said two monkes uppon a faire velvett cushion all embrodered, singinge the anthem of *Christus resurgens*, they brought it to the high altar, settinge that on the midst thereof, whereon it stood, the two monkes kneelinge on their knees before the altar and sencing it, all the time that the rest of the whole quire was in singinge the aforesaid anthem of *Christus resurgens*. The which anthem being ended, the two monkes took up the cushions and the picture from the altar, supportinge it betwixt them, proceeding in procession from the high altar to the South quire door, where there was four antient gentlemen belonginge to the prior, appointed to attend their cominge, holding up a moste rich canopye of purple velvett, tacked round about with redd silk and gold fringe; and at every corner did stand one of these gentlemen to beare it over the said image, with the Holy Sacrament carried by two monkes round about the church, the whole quire waiting uppon it with goodly torches and great store of other lights till they came to the high altar againe, whereon they did place the said image, there to remaine untill the Ascension day."

An English Easter custom is referred to in more than one book of sermons.

"Fryndys," says one preacher, "you schall understonde that hyt ys a custome in plasys of worschyp, and in many other dyvers plasys, that at thys solempe fest of Estern, the whyche ys ye day and fest of the glorious Resurexcion of our Lorde Ihesu, now to put owghte and remove ye fire owghte of ye hall wt ye blakke wynture brondys defyllyd and made blakke wt vyle smoke, and instede of ye seyde fyre and blakke wynter brondys to strewe ye hall wythe green rushys and other swete flewres."

And another preacher adds the moral—

"Shewing example to all men and women that they should in like wise clense the house of their soules."

Langland gives us a slight sketch of an Easter morning in England as he knew it in the fourteenth century.

"Men rang to ye resurrection and with that ich awakede
and kalled Kytte my wyf, and Kalote my daughter,
A-ryse and go reverence, Godes resurrection,
and crepe on knees to he cryos and cusse hit, for
And ryghtfulokest a telyk. Non techer juwel on erthe
for Godes blesside body hit bar for oure bote
And hit afereth ye feonde for such is ye myghte
may no grysliche gost glyde ther hit shadoweth."

ROGATION DAYS.—During the entire week of Easter all work not actually necessary was ordered to be laid aside, that the people might have time for spiritual rejoicing. During this time also, in most of the larger churches, after Evensong, a procession with all the ministers vested in albs was formed to the newly hallowed font, which, wreathed with flowers and evergreens, was censed by the parish priest, and a "station" for prayer was held at that spot.

On the three days before the feast of our Lord's Ascension, the ancient practice of going in procession singing the litany of the Saints was kept up in every church, unless it was one of the churches in a cathedral city, for in that case the various parishes had to attend at the Mother church and join together in one procession. These "rogations," as they were called, passed out of the church precincts, and wound their way about streets or country roads of the parish, unless bad weather confined them to the church itself.

"Gode men," says the *Liber Festivalis*, "theis thre dayes suying, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, ye schall faston and com to chyrche, husbond and wyfe and servaunde, for alle we be syners and neduth to have mercy of God. . . . So holy Chyrch ordaineth yt none schall excuson hym from theise processions yt may godely ben there."

The celebrated Richard FitzRalph, Archbishop of Armagh, in 1346, when Dean of Lichfield, preached to the people at St. Nicholas' Chapel on the meaning and obligation of these days of intercession, or rogation, and explained why men prayed to the Saints, and why they sang their *Miserere* to God. He also told the people why the cross went at the head of the procession, and why the image of a dragon with its tail out was carried the two first days before the procession and the third day without its tail after the procession. It is to those standards that the Sarum processional refers in regard to these litanies, and to the same are to be referred the items to be found in church accounts, such as those of Salisbury, where in 1462 boys are paid "to carry the poles and standards on Rogation days."

The rest of the Christian year, with its round of feasts, does not here require to be specially noted. The celebration of one differed from that of another merely in the degree of splendour with which the people decked their churches and brought forth their precious vestments. At Whitsuntide and Corpus Christi day; on Assumption and on All Hallows, as well as on its own dedication day, each church endeavoured to outdo its neighbour by the splendour of its services. In the processions of Corpus Christi day, not unfrequently several churches united their forces together,

and made a brave show in honour of the most Blessed Sacrament with their various processional crosses and banners, torches and thuribles, not to speak of the amalgamated choirs and the throng of devout worshippers who accompanied the Sacred Host in a triumphant progress through the streets of our English cities, or along the roads and lanes of rural England.

CHAPTER IX

THE SACRAMENTS

THIS account of parochial life in pre-Reformation England requires some brief description of the Sacramental system, which had its effect on every soul in the district. From the time of his baptism as a child of the Church, till his body was laid to rest in its tomb, each parishioner was the constant recipient of some one of those mysterious rites, by which, as he was taught by the Church and as he believed, God's grace was received into his soul to enable him to lead the life of a good Christian. In the administration of these Sacraments, nothing is more clear in the teaching of the Church of the Middle Ages than that there was to be no question of money. They—the Sacraments—were spiritual things, and to sell them for fees would be plain simony, which was prohibited by every law of God and man. If the administrator was permitted to take an offering, it was only with the plain understanding that the payment was made in regard to the service rendered, for which the recipient desired to make some return; and that the Sacrament should be given without the fee. In the case of such a Sacrament as Penance, for example, where the acceptance of a fee or offering might lead to a

misunderstanding of the judicial character of the rite, and so bring it into contempt, the reception of money was altogether prohibited by the ecclesiastical authorities, and any such abuse was sternly repressed. Thus, to take an example, in the acts of the Synod of Ely in 1364, the bishop, Simon Langham, says, "We have heard, and greatly grieve to have done so, that some priests exact money from the laity for the administration of penance or other Sacraments, and that some, for the sake of filthy lucre, impose penances" which bring in money to them. "These we altogether prohibit."

The Sacraments, according to the teaching of the Church, which every one who pretended to be a practical Christian was bound to receive, were Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, and in the case of those desiring to marry, Matrimony. Something may, therefore, usefully be said about each of these.

BAPTISM.—"To those coming into the *mare magnum* of this world," says the legate Othobono, "Baptism must be regarded as the first plank of safety in this sea of many shipwrecks to support us to the port of salvation." It is, he continues, the gate through which all have to enter to enjoy the grace of the other Sacraments, and for this reason "any error in regard to it is most dangerous," and the possibility of any child dying without receiving the saving waters is to be zealously guarded against. Because of the priceless efficacy of the Sacrament, every parish priest was warned to teach his people in the vernacular the form of properly administering it, in case of need when a priest could not be had. On this matter also the Archdeacon in the time of his visitation of a parish was to inquire diligently whether these instructions

had been given, and whether the parishioners generally knew how to baptize in case of need.

The importance which the Church attached to this Sacrament is well illustrated by a Constitution of St. Edmund of Canterbury, which orders that when the expectation of childbirth becomes imminent, all parents should be warned to prepare a vessel and water to be ready at hand, in case some sudden need should require the administration of baptism.

Ordinarily speaking, there can be no doubt that the old English practice was that every child should, if possible, be baptized in the parish church on the day of birth. In the ancient "proofs of age," this practice is evident; one example will be sufficient. In 1360 it was requisite to prove the age of John, son and heir of Adam de Welle, and the first witness who was called, said that "he knew that he was born on the eve of St. Bartholomew the Apostle, because he was with his master who stood god-parent to the child on that day, which was Sunday 21 years ago." Another witness adds, that it was in the evening that the baptism took place; and another that it was performed by John de Scrubby, the chaplain.

There was, however, an exception. There were two days for public baptism in the church, namely, Holy Saturday and the Saturday before Pentecost, on which days the font in every parish church was solemnly blessed. Apparently among English mothers in the thirteenth century, this day was regarded as unlucky, and was avoided by them as far as possible for the baptism of their children, a superstition that the two legates Otho and Othobono endeavoured to

eradicate. It became consequently in England the practice, if children were born within eight days of either of these two vigils of Easter or Pentecost, that their baptism should be administered after the blessing of the font, if there were no danger in the delay. In the case of the baptism being held over, however, halfway between the day of birth and the day of baptism, the child was to have all the accompanying rites administered except only the actual baptism.

One of the demands of the Devon "rebels" in the time of the religious changes in Edward VI.'s reign had reference to this question of baptism. "We will," it ran, "that our curates shall minister the Sacrament of Baptism at all times, as well as in the week-day as on the holy-day." To this Cranmer, in his reply, says, "Every Easter and Whitsuneven, until this time, the fonts were hallowed in every church and many collects and other prayers were read for them that were baptized. But alas! in vain, and as it were a mocking with God; for at those times, except it were by chance, none were baptized, but all were baptized before."

The offering for the administration of baptism was strictly voluntary. Whenever any difficulty arose between the parson and his people on this matter, the bishop always took the opportunity of laying down as the common law of the Church that nothing could be exacted. Bishop Grandisson, for instance, in 1355, in a case at Moreton Hampstead, declared "that no priest could deny, or presume to deny, any Sacrament to his parishioners by demanding money, but that he might afterwards take what the people chose to offer him."

The reverence with which our forefathers regarded

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SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

whatever had been used for any sacred purpose is illustrated in a matter connected with this Sacrament. Bishop Quevil, in the Synod of Exeter in 1287, states that when in case of necessity a child had been baptized in its own home, the vessel that had been used should either be destroyed by fire or given to the church to be used for ecclesiastical purposes; and that the water should either be thrown on the fire or taken to the church and poured down the "sacrarium." Myrc, in his *Instructions*, gives this same order—

> "Another way thou might to yet
> In a vessel to cryston hyt,
> And when scho hath do ryght so
> Watere and vessel brenne hem bo,
> Other brynge hyt to the chyrche anon
> And cast hyt to the font ston."

Bishop Quevil, in the same Synod, also states the law of the Church as to god-parents. For a boy, two men and one woman were permissible; and similarly for a girl, two women and one man. All others could only be regarded as witnesses, and did not incur the bond of spiritual relationship as true god-parents and their god-children did.

Before passing on, a few words must be said as to the Font. According to the Constitutions of the English Church, it was to be made of stone, and to be covered. It was on no account to be used for any other purpose, even ecclesiastical. For this reason, like the Holy Oils, it was to be kept under lock and key. It was the privilege of a parochial church alone to have a font, and the construction of one, even in a Chapel of Ease, required the leave not only of the bishop, but also of the rector of the parish. Thus, to take

an instance, about the middle of the fourteenth century Lord Beauchamp desired to have a font in his chapel at Beauchamp. The bishop gave his consent, but on condition that the approval of the rector was first obtained.

CHURCHING OF WOMEN.—Immediately connected with the question of baptism is that old Catholic practice of the churching of women. The rite was probably suggested by the prescriptions of the law in Leviticus, and it was used in the Greek as well as in the Latin Church. The priest leads the woman into the church, saying, "Come into the temple of God. Adore the Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who has given thee fruitfulness in childbearing." For churchings, as for marriages and burials, the general fee was supposed to be 1*d.*; but most people who could afford it made a larger offering. The fee for churching is specially named by Bishop Grandisson amongst those which a parson should not demand, but which all who could, ought to give willingly. Amongst the goods of St. Mary the Great, Cambridge, in the churchwardens' accounts is one: "Item. A clothe of tappestry werk for chirching of wifes, lyned with canvas, *in ecclesia.*" This, no doubt, would be a carpet upon which the woman knelt before the altar.

CONFIRMATION was, as Myrc says, "in lewde mennes menynge is i-called the bys(h)opynge," because it is and can be given only by bishops. Strong pressure was brought to bear upon the clergy to see that all were rightly confirmed, and Archbishop Peckham, in 1280, forbade "any one to be admitted to the Sacrament of our Lord's body and blood unless he had been confirmed, except when in danger of death."

Bishop Woodlock of Winchester, in 1308, has a special Instruction on the need of this Sacrament. Because he says, "our adversary the devil, wishing to have us as companions in his perdition, attacks with all his powers those who are baptized; our watchful Mother the Church has added the Sacrament of Confirmation, that by the strength received in it every Christian may resist with greater force our hostile enemy." Parents are consequently to be warned to have their children confirmed as soon as possible. If they are not confirmed before they are three years old, unless there has been no opportunity, the parents are to be made to fast one day on bread and water in punishment of their negligence. Moreover, since the Sacrament may not be given twice, parents are to be bound to acquaint their children, when they grow up, of the fact of their Confirmation. Priests are also to instruct their people as to the law that through Confirmation there arises a spiritual relationship, as in Baptism, between the god-parents and the children and their parents.

The Synod of Oxford laid it down as the law, that any adult, when about to be confirmed, must first go to receive the Sacrament of Penance from his own parish priest and fast on the day of his Confirmation till after its reception. Priests were required, also, to instruct their people frequently on the need of getting their children confirmed as soon as possible after they were baptized. This the canonist Lyndwood considers would mean within six months or so. The Synod likewise warned parents not to wait for the bishop to come to their own parish, but to take their children to any neighbouring place, where they might have heard that the bishop was to be found. And any parish within seven miles

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

was for this purpose to be considered "a neighbouring place." In Bishop Grandisson's Register there is an example of his giving confirmation, at St. Buryan's, in 1336, to "children almost without number (*quasi innumerabiles*) from the parish and the district round about."

The honour and respect shown to the Chrism, which was used by the bishop at Confirmation, is manifested by the "old silk cloth" and "a clothe of syndale" used to carry the Chrismatory at St. Mary the Great, Cambridge. The Chrism was also bound to be renewed every year, the old being burnt and a new stock procured from what was consecrated on Maundy Thursday, in every cathedral church. Moreover, when presenting a child for Confirmation, the parents had to bring with them a linen band, or napkin, to bind round its head after Confirmation, and cover the place where it had been anointed. This band, called *Fascia*, or "Chrism cloth," was, according to various directions, to be left on the head of the child three, seven, or eight days, when the lately confirmed child was to be taken to the church by its parents, and there have its forehead washed by the priest over the font. The *fasciæ ligaturæ*, or "Chrism cloths," were then to be either burnt or left to the use of the church. Myrc, in his *Instructions*, thus gives the usage—

"Whenne the chyldre confermed ben
Bondes a-bowte here neckes be lafte
That from hem schule not be rafte
Tyl at chyrche the eghthe day
The preste hymself take hem a-way
Thenne schale he wyth hys owne hondes
Brenne that ylke same bondes,
And wassche the chylde over the font
There he was anoynted in the front."

Finally, the greatest care was taken not only to see that all Christians should receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, but that there should be no doubt as to its valid reception. An instance of this is to be found in Bishop Brantyngham's Register. In 1382, some unknown person, calling himself a bishop, went about the diocese of Exeter giving the tonsure, and confirming children, and in other ways, as the bishop says, "putting his sickle into other men's harvest." Under these circumstances, the parents of all children presented for confirmation to this unknown person were to be warned from every parish pulpit to come and give evidence, in order that it might be determined what should be done.

PENANCE.—The Sacrament of Penance, or, in other words, "Confession," was obligatory on all at least once a year. The obligation, however, was obviously not considered the full measure of duty for those who desired to lead good Christian lives. Bishop Brunton, of Rochester, in a sermon preached about the year 1388 on the first Sunday of Lent, whilst laying down the law of Confession at the beginning of Lent, strongly urges upon his audience the utility of frequently approaching that Sacrament, but reminds them that a mere formal Confession without a firm purpose of amendment is worse than useless.

In the Synod of Exeter, in 1287, parish priests are charged "to warn their parishioners, and frequently to exhort them in their sermons, to come to Confession to their own priest thrice in the year—at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, or at the very least at the beginning of Lent." The same synodal instruction warns the parish priests, moreover, to grant permission generously and freely

to any one wishing to confess to some other priest, and it adds, "that if any one shall not have confessed himself and communicated once in the year, he shall be prohibited coming to the church, and when dead be refused ecclesiastical burial."

All, rich and poor, noble and simple, on coming to the Sacrament of Penance, were treated alike. An old fifteenth-century book of *Instructions* says—

"Every body that shall be confessed, be he never so hye degree or estate, ought to shew loweness in herte, lowenes in speche and lowenes in body for that tyme to hym that shall hear hym: and or he begynne to shew what lyeth in hys conscience, fyrste at hys beginnyng he shall say, *Benedicite:* and afturwards hys confessor hath answered *Dominus*. Sume than, whych be lettered, seyn here *Confiteor* til they come to *Mea culpa:* sume seyn no ferthere, but to *Quia peccavi nimis;* some seyn no *Confiteor* in latin till at the last end. Of these maner begynnings it is lytyl charge, for the substance of Confession is in opyn declaration and schewyng of ye synnes, in whyche a mannus conscience demyth hym gulty agenst God. In thys declaration be manye formes of shewyng, for some scheme and divyde here confession in thought, speche and dede, and in thys forme sume can specyfye here synnes, and namely in cotydian confession, as when a man is confessed ofte: oythes as every day or every othur day or onus in sevene nyght. Also sume schewe and here confession by declaration of ye fyve wyttes, and all may be well as in such cotydyan confession. Also sume, and the most parte lettyred and unletteryd, schewe openly her synnes be confession of ye sevene dedly synnes, and thane they schewe what they have offendyd God agenste Hys precepts, and then in mysdyspendyng of here fyve wyttes, and thanne in not fulfyllyng ye seven dedus of mercy. And so, whanne they have specyfyed what comyth to here mynde, then yn ye ende, they yelde

them cowpable generally to God and putte hem in Hys mercy, askyng lowly penaunce for her synnnes and absolution of here confessor in the name of holy church."

The instructions, given by the Canons of the English Church, as to the method to be followed by priests in hearing confessions, are simple and to the point. They are to remember that they are doctors for the cure of spiritual evils, and to be ever ready "to pour oil and wine" into the wounds of their penitents. They are to bear in mind the proverb, that "what may cure the eye need not cure the heel," and are to apply the proper remedy fitting to each disease. They are to be patient, and "to hear what any one may have to say, bearing with them in the spirit of mildness, and not exasperating them by word or look." They are "not to let their eyes wander hither and thither, but keep them cast downwards, not looking into the face of the penitent," unless it be to gauge the sincerity of his sorrow, which is often reflected most of all in the countenance." Women are to be confessed in the open church, and outside the (lenten) veil, not so as to be heard by others but to be seen by them."

The place where confessions might be heard was settled in the Constitutions of Archbishop Walter Reynold, in 1322.

"Let the priest," it is said, "choose for himself a common place for hearing confessions, where he may be seen generally by all in the church; and do not let him hear any one, and especially any woman, in a private place, except in great necessity and because of some infirmity of the penitent."

Myrc, in his *Instructions*, says that in Confession the priest is to

"Teche hym to knele downe on hys kne,
Pore other ryche, whether he be,
Then over thyn yen pulle thyn hod,
And here hys schryfte wyth mylde mod."

The place usually chosen by the priest to hear the confessions of his people was apparently at the opening of the chancel, or at a bench end near that part of the nave. In some of the churchwardens' accounts there is mention of a special seat or bench, called the "shryving stool," "the shriving pew," "the shriving place;" whilst at St. Mary the Great, Cambridge, there appears to have been a special erection for Lent time, as there is an entry of expense for "six irons pertaining to the shryving stole for lenton," which suggests that these iron rods were to support some sort of a screen round about the place of confession. Perhaps, however, it may have been for an extra confessor, since, as already related, in one place it is said that the parish paid for three extra priests "to shreve" in Holy Week.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST.—All adults of every parish were bound to receive the Holy Communion at least once a year under pain of being considered outside the benefits and privileges of Holy Church and of being refused Christian burial, if they were to die without having made their peace. Besides the Easter precept, all were strongly urged to approach the Holy Eucharist more frequently, and especially at Christmas and Easter, and, as has been already pointed out, there is some evidence to show that, in point of fact, lay people did communicate more frequently, and especially on the Sundays of Lent.

At Easter and other times of general Communion the

laity, after their reception of the Sacrament, were given a drink of wine and water from a chalice. The clergy were, however, directed to explain carefully to the people that this was not part of the Sacrament. They were to impress upon them the fact that they really received the Body and Blood of our Lord under the one form of bread, and that this cup of wine and water was given merely to enable them to swallow the host more securely and easily after their fast.

EXTREME UNCTION.—

"This Sacrament," says the Synod of Exeter, "is to be considered as health giving to both body and soul . . . wherefore it is not the least of the Sacraments, and parish priests, when required, should show themselves ever ready to visit the sick, and to administer it to such as ask, without asking or expecting any payment or reward.

"We further order that, avoiding all negligence, parish priests shall be watchful and careful in the care committed to them, and that without reasonable cause they never sleep out of their parishes. And further that in case they do ever so, they procure some fitting substitute, who knows how to do everything which the cure of souls requires."

If by the fault, negligence, or absence of his priest any one, old or young, shall die without Baptism, Confession, Holy Communion, or Extreme Unction, the priest convicted of this is to be forthwith suspended from the exercise of his ecclesiastical functions, and this suspension is not to be relaxed until he has done fitting penance "for so grave a crime."

VISITATION OF THE SICK.—The subject of *Extreme Unction*, "the Sacrament of the sick," to be given in danger of death through sickness, raises the question of the visitation

SACRAMENT OF EXTREME UNCTION

of the sick in a mediæval parish. The order that all parish priests should visit the sick of their district every Sunday has already been noticed. It was, moreover, a positive law of the Church, that every priest should go at once on being called to a sick person, no matter what time of the day or night the summons might come. Priests were ordered also to impress upon all doctors the need of urging sick people and their friends to send immediately for the priest in all cases of serious illnesses. Priests, however, were not to wait to be called, but directly they heard that any of their people were unwell they were warned to go at once to them.

A chance story, used to enliven a fifteenth-century sermon, illustrates the readiness of priests to go to the sick whenever they were summoned.

"I read," says the preacher, "in Devonshire, besides Axbridge dwelt a holy vicar, and had in his parish a sick woman that lay all at the death, half a myle from him in a town. The which woman at midnight sent after this vicar to come and give her her rites. Then this vicar with all haste that he might he rose and rode to the church and took God's body in a box of ivory," etc.

Archbishop Peckham legislated for the mode of carrying the Blessed Sacrament to the sick, or rather he codified and made obligatory the usual practice. The parish priest was to be vested in surplice and stole, and accompanied by another priest, or at least by a clerk. He was to carry the Blessed Sacrament in both hands before his breast, covered by a veil, and was to be preceded by a server carrying a light in a lantern, and ringing a hand bell, to give notice to the people that "the King of Glory under

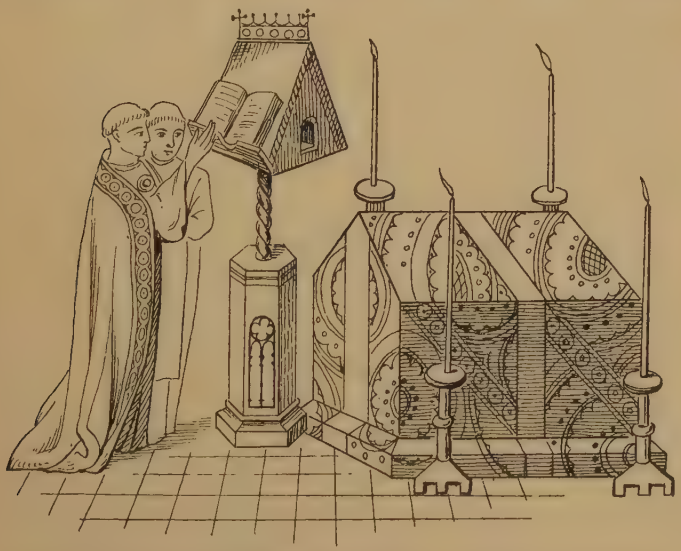
the veil of bread" was being borne through their midst, in order that they might kneel or otherwise adore Him.

If the case was so urgent, that there was no time for the priest to secure a clerk to carry the light and bell, Lyndwood notes that the practice was for the priest to hang the lamp and bell upon one of his arms. This he would also do in large parishes, where sick people had to be visited at a distance and on horseback. In this case the lamp and bell would be hung round the horse's neck.

On the return to the church, should the Blessed Sacrament have been consumed, the light was to be extinguished and the bell silenced, so that the people might understand, and not, in this case, kneel as the priest passed along. Lyndwood adds that the people should be told to follow the Sacrament with "bowed head, devotion of heart, and uplifted hands." They were to be taught also to use a set form of prayer as the priest passed along, such as the following: "Hail! Light of the world, Word of the Father, true Victim, Living Flesh, true God and true Man. Hail flesh of Christ, which has suffered for me! Oh, flesh of Christ, let Thy blood wash my soul!" The great canonist says that he himself on these occasions was accustomed to make use of the well-known "*Ave verum Corpus, natum ex Maria Virgine*," etc.

The bell and light, or lights, for the visitation of the sick, were to be found by the parish, and the churchwardens' accounts consistently record expenses to procure and maintain these lights. In some places, apparently, the people found two such lanterns instead of the one which the law obliged them to furnish. In the Archdeacon's visitations,

also, there were set inquiries to see that the parish did its duty in this matter. In one such examination there are references to the necessary "cyphus pro infirmis," which is stated to be good, bad, or wanting altogether. What this may have been is not quite clear; but probably it was the dish in which the priest purified his fingers, after having communicated the sick person. Myrc gives a rhyming



HEARSE AND PALL, FIFTEENTH CENTURY. CANTORS AT LECTERN

summary of what a priest should know about visiting the sick. He is to go fast when called; he is to take a clean surplice and a stole, "and pul thy hod over thy syght;" in case of death being imminent, he is not to make the sick man confess all his sins, but merely charge him to ask God's mercy with humble heart. If the sick man cannot speak, but shows by signs that he wishes for the Sacraments—

"Nertheless thou schalt hym Soyle, and give hym hosul and holy oyle."

The bishops watched carefully to see that no laxity should creep into the mode of giving the Viaticum to the sick. Bishop Grandisson, in 1335, issued a special mandate to the priests of his diocese on the matter, as he had heard that some carelessness had been noticed. He reminds them that the Provincial Constitutions were clear in their prescriptions that all were to wear a surplice and stole, unless the weather were bad, and then these might be carried and put on before the room of the sick man was entered. They must always have the light borne before them, however, and the bell was to be rung to call the attention of the people generally to the passing of the Sacrament, and thus enable them to make their adoration.

According to most books of instruction on the duties of priests, before the sick man was anointed or received the holy Viaticum, the parson was to put to him what were known as "the seven interrogations." He was to be asked: (1) if he believed the articles of the faith and the Holy Scriptures; (2) whether he recognized that he had offended God Almighty; (3) whether he was sorry for his sins; (4) whether he desired to amend, and if God gave him more time, by His grace he would do so; (5) whether he forgave all his enemies; (6) whether he would make all satisfaction; (7) "Belevest thowe fully that Criste dyed for the, and that thow may never be saved but by the merite of Cristes passione, and thonne thonkest therof God with thyne harte as moche as thowe mayest? He answerethe, Yee."

"Thanne let the curat desire the sick persone to saye *In manus*

tuas &cetera with a good stedfast mynde and yf that he canne. And yef he cannot, let the curate saye it for hym. And who so ever may verely of very good conscience and trowthe without any faynyng, answere 'yee,' to all the articles and poyntes afore rehersed, he shalle live ever in hevyne with Alle myghtie God and with his holy cumpany, wherunto Ihesus brynge bothe youe and me. Amen."

MARRIAGE.—So far in this chapter the Sacraments which every parishioner had to receive at one time or other have been briefly treated. It remains to speak of the Sacrament of Matrimony, which, though not absolutely general, yet commonly affected most people in every parish. "Marriage," says Bishop Quevil, in the Synod of Exeter—"marriage should be celebrated with great discretion and reverence, in proper places and at proper times, with all modesty and mature consideration ; it should be celebrated not in taverns nor during feastings and drinkings, nor in secret and suspect places." That a matter of this importance should be rightly done, the Synod lays down the law of the Catholic Church on the point ; no espousal or marriage was to be held valid unless the contract was made in the presence of the parish priest and three witnesses. For, although the contract of the parties was the essential factor in marriage, still, "without the authority of the Church, by the judgment of which the contract had to be approved, marriages are not to be contracted."

The first matter to be attended to in arranging for a marriage in any parochial church was, as now, the publication of the banns in the church on three successive Sundays or feast days. This was to secure the proof of the freedom of the parties to marry. In a book of instructions for parish

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

priests, written about 1426, some interesting information is given as to marriage.

"The seventh Sacrament is wedlock," it says, "before the which Sacrament the banes in holy church shal be thryes asked on thre solempne dayes—a werk day or two between, at the lest: eche day on this maner: *N.* of V. has spoken with *N.* of P. to have hir to his wife, and to ryght lyve in forme of holy chyrche. If any mon knowe any lettyng qwy they may not come togedyr say now or never on payne of cursyng."

On the day appointed for the marriage, at the door of the church, the priest shall interrogate the parties as follows:—

"*N.* Hast thu wille to have this wommon to thi wedded wif. *R.* Ye syr. My thu wel fynde at thi best to love hur and hold ye to hur and to no other to thi lives end. *R.* Ye syr. Then take her by yor hande and say after me: I *N.* take the *N.* in forme of holy chyrche to my wedded wyfe, forsakyng alle other, holdyng me hollych to the, in sekenes and in hele, in ryches and in poverte, in well and in wo, tyl deth us departe, and there to I plyght ye my trowthe."

Then the woman repeated the form as above.

It was this "Marriage at the church door" which had to be established, according to Bracton, in any question as to the legality or non-legality of the contract. After this "taking to wife at the church door," the parties entered the church and completed the rite in the church itself. As in the case of baptisms, churchings, and funerals, the fee for marriages was fixed at 1*d.*, but apparently all who could afford it, gave more.

"Three ornaments," says the author of *Dives and Pauper*—"three ornaments (at marriage) belonged principally to the wyfe: a

rynge on her finger, a broche on hyr breste, and a garlande on hir head. The rynge betokeneth true love; the broche betokeneth clenness of herte and chastity that she ought to have; and the garland betokeneth the gladness and the dignity of the sacrament of wedlock."

Some of the ornaments for the bride at marriage the parish provided. The nuptial veil was one of the things which the churchwardens were supposed to find, and frequent inquiries were made concerning it in the parochial visitations. In one parish the wardens possessed "one standing mazer to serve for brides at their wedding;" and in another, a set of jewels was left in trust for the use of brides on their wedding day. If lent outside the parish, they were to be paid for, and the receipt was to go to the common purposes of the church to which they belonged.

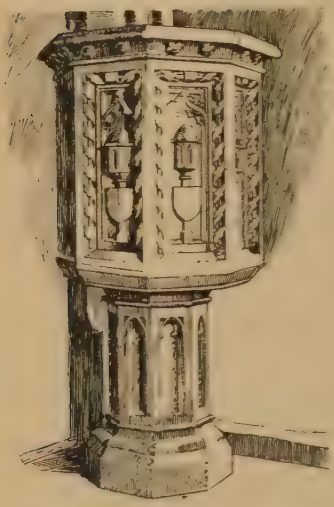
CHAPTER X

THE PARISH PULPIT

THE influence on parochial life of the Sunday sermon and what went with it can hardly be exaggerated. It was not only that it was at this time that the priest instructed his people in their faith and in the practice of their religion; but the pulpit was the means, and in those days the sole means, by which the official or quasi-official business of the place was announced to the inhabitants of a district. The great variety of matters that had necessarily to be brought to the notice of the parishioners would have all tended to make the pulpit utterances on the Sunday, in a pre-Reformation parish, both interesting and instructive. In this chapter it is proposed to illustrate some of the many features presented at the time of the Sunday sermon; and first as to the regular religious teaching of faith and morals.

The first duty of the Church, after seeing to the administration of the Sacraments and the offering of the Sacrifice of the Altar, was obviously to teach and direct its children in all matters of belief and practice. This was done from the pulpit, which was in all probability an unpretentious wooden erection, perhaps in the screen, or at the chancel arch. In

one case there is given the cost of the erection of a pulpit of wood; another churchwardens' account speaks of "clasps for" the pulpit (?), possibly hinges for the door; a third tells of "a green silk veil for the pulpit"; and a fourth of "cloth and a pillow" for it. The chief interest, however, is not in the thing itself, but in its use.



PULPIT, 1475, ST. PAUL'S, TRURO

It is impossible to think that Chaucer's typical priest was a mere creation of his imagination. The picture must have had its counterpart in numberless parishes in England in the fourteenth century. This is how the poet's priest is described:—

"A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a poure parsoun of a town;
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Christe's Gospel trewely wolde preche,
His parischens devoutly wolde he teche.
* * * * *
But Christe's lore and His Apostles twelve
He taughte, but first he folwede it himselve."

It will be remembered, too, that the story Chaucer makes his priest contribute to the *Canterbury Tales* is nothing else than an excellent and complete tract, almost certainly a translation of a Latin theological treatise, upon the Sacrament of Penance.

As a sample, however, of what is popularly believed on this subject at the present day, it is well to take the opinion of by no means an extreme party writer, Bishop Hobhouse. "Preaching," he says, "was not a regular part of the Sunday observances as now. It was rare, but we must not conclude from the silence of our MSS. (*i.e.* churchwardens' accounts) that it was never practised." In another place he states, upon what he thinks sufficient evidence, "that there was a total absence of any system of clerical training, and that the cultivation of the conscience as the directing power of man's soul, and the implanting of holy affections in the heart seem to have been no part of the Church's system of guidance." That this is certainly not a correct view as to the way in which the pastors of the parochial churches in pre-Reformation days discharged—or rather neglected—their duties, in view of the facts, appears to be certain. The grounds for this opinion are the following: for practical purposes we may divide the religious teaching, given by the clergy, into the two classes of *sermons* and *instructions*. The distinction is obvious. By the first are meant those set discourses to prove some definite theme, or expound some definite passage of Holy Scripture, or deduce the lessons to be learnt from the life of some saint. In other words, putting aside the controversial aspect, which, of course, was rare in those days, a sermon in mediæval times was much what a sermon is to-day. There was this difference, however, that in pre-Reformation days the sermon was not probably so frequent as in these modern times. Now, whatever instruction is given to the people at large is conveyed to them almost entirely in the form of set sermons, which,

however admirable in themselves, seldom convey to their hearers consecutive and systematic, dogmatic and moral teaching. Mediæval methods of imparting religious knowledge were different. For the most part the priest fulfilled the duty of instructing his flock by plain, unadorned, and familiar instructions upon matters of faith and practice. These must have much more resembled our present catechetical instructions than our modern pulpit discourses. To the subject of set sermons I shall have occasion to return presently, but as vastly more important, at any rate in the opinion of our Catholic forefathers, let us first consider the question of familiar instructions. For the sake of clearness we will confine our attention to the two centuries (the fourteenth and fifteenth) previous to the great religious revolution under Henry VIII.

Before the close of the thirteenth century, namely, in A.D. 1281, Archbishop Peckham issued the celebrated Constitutions of the Synod of Oxford which are called by his name. There we find the instruction of the people legislated for minutely.

"We order," runs the Constitution, "that every priest having the charge of a flock do, four times in each year (that is, once each quarter), on one or more solemn feast days, either himself or by some one else, instruct the people in the vulgar language, simply and without any fantastical admixture of subtle distinctions, in the articles of the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Evangelical Precepts, the seven works of mercy, the seven deadly sins with their offshoots, the seven principal virtues, and the Seven Sacraments."

The Synod then proceeded to set out in considerable detail each of the points upon which the people must be

instructed. Now, it is obvious that if four times a year this law was complied with in the spirit in which it was given, the people were very thoroughly instructed indeed in their faith. But was this law faithfully carried out by the clergy, and rigorously enforced by the bishops in the succeeding centuries? That is the real question. I think that there is ample evidence that it was. In the first place, the Constitutions of Peckham are referred to constantly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as the foundation of the existing practices in the English Church. Thus, to take a few specific instances in the middle of the fourteenth century, the decree of a diocesan Synod orders—

STONE PULPIT BRACKET, WALPOLE ST. ANDREW, NORFOLK

"That all rectors, vicars, or chaplains holding ecclesiastical offices shall expound clearly and plainly to their people, on all Sundays and feast days, the Word of God and the Catholic faith of the Apostles; and that they shall diligently instruct their subjects in the articles of faith, and teach them in their native language the Apostles' Creed, and urge them to expound it and teach the same faith to their children."

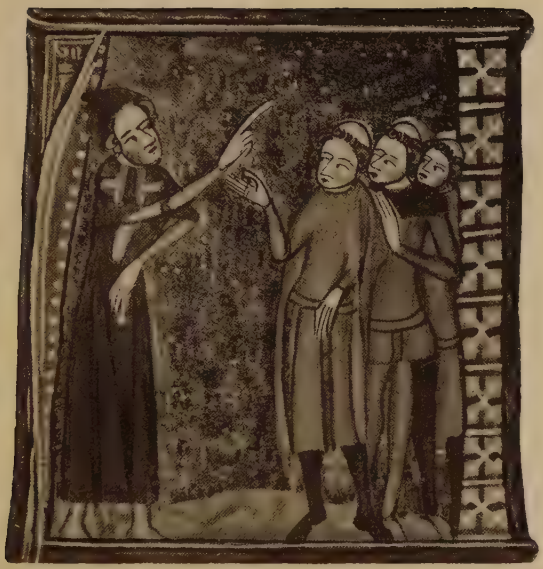
Again, in A.D. 1357, Archbishop Thoresby, of York, anxious for the better instruction of his people, commissioned a monk of St. Mary's, York, named Gatryke, to draw out in English an exposition of the Creed, the Commandments, the seven deadly sins, etc. This tract the archbishop, as he says

in his preface, through the counsel of his clergy, sent to all his priests—

"So that each and every one, who under him had the charge of souls, do openly in English, upon Sundays teach and preach them, that they have cure of the law and the way to know God Almighty. And he commands and bids, in all that he may, that all who have keeping or cure under him, enjoin their parishioners and their subjects, that they hear and learn all these things, and oft, either rehearse them till they know them, and so teach them to their children, if they any have, when they are old enough to learn them; and that parsons and vicars and all parish priests inquire diligently of their subjects at Lent-time, when they come to shrift, whether they know these things, and if it be found that they know them not, that they enjoin them upon his behalf, and on pain of penance, to know them. And so there be none to excuse themselves through ignorance of them, our father, the Archbishop, of his goodness has ordained and bidden that they be showed openly in English amongst the flock."

To take another example: the Acts of the Synod, held by Simon Langham at Ely in A.D. 1364, order that every parish priest frequently preach and expound the Ten Commandments, etc., in English (*in idiomate communi*), and all priests are urged to devote themselves to the study of the Sacred Scriptures, so as to be ready "to give an account of the hope and faith" that are in them. Further, they are to see that the children are taught their prayers; and even adults, when coming to confession, are to be examined as to their religious knowledge.

Even when the rise of the Lollard heretics rendered it important that some check should be given to general and unauthorized preaching, this did not interfere with the



ARCHIDIACONAL VISITATION

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

ordinary work of instruction. The orders of Archbishop Arundel in A.D. 1408, forbidding all preaching without an episcopal licence, set forth in distinct terms, that this prohibition did not apply "to the parish priests," etc., who by the Constitutions of Archbishop Peckham were bound to instruct their people, in simple language, on all matters concerning their faith and observance. And further, in order to check the practice of treating people to such formal and set discourses, these simple and practical instructions were ordered to be adopted without delay in all parish churches.

To this testimony of the English Church as to the value attached to popular instruction may be added the authority of the Provincial Council of York, held in A.D. 1466 by Archbishop Nevill. By its decrees not only is the order as to systematic quarterly and simple instructions reiterated, but the points of the teaching are again set out by the Synod in great detail.

There is, moreover, ample evidence to convince any one who may desire to study the subject, that this duty of giving plain instructions to the people was not neglected up to the era of the Reformation itself. During the fifteenth century, manuals to assist the clergy in the performance of this obligation were multiplied in considerable numbers; which would not have been the case had the practice of frequently giving these familiar expositions fallen into abeyance. To some of these manuals it will be necessary to refer presently, but here should be noted specially the fact that one of the earliest books ever issued from an English press by Caxton, probably at the same time (A.D. 1483) as the *Liber Festivalis* (or book of sermons for Sundays and feast days), was a set of four

lengthy discourses, published, as they expressly declare, to enable priests to fulfil the obligation imposed on them by the Constitutions of Peckham. As these were intended to take at least four Sundays, and as the whole set of instructions had to be given four times each year, it follows that at least sixteen Sundays, or a quarter of the year, were devoted to this simple and straightforward teaching of what every Christian was bound to believe and to do.

That the parish priests really did their duty in instructing their people there is evidence of another and that an official character. The Episcopal or Chapter Registers fortunately in some few cases contain documents recording the results of the regular Visitations of parishes. It is almost by chance, of course, that papers of this kind have been preserved. Most of them would have been destroyed as possessing little importance in the opinion of those who ransacked the archives at the time of the change of religion. The testimony of these Visitation papers as to the performance of this duty of instruction on the part of the clergy is most valuable. Hardly less important is the proof they afford of the intelligent interest taken by the lay-folk of the parish in the work, and of their capability of rationally and religiously appreciating these instructions given them by their clergy. The process of these Visitations must be understood to fully appreciate the significance of their testimony. First of all, certain of the parishioners were chosen and were examined upon oath as to the state of the parish, and as to the way in which the pastor performed his duties. As samples of these sworn depositions, what are to be found in a "Visitation of Capitular manors and estates of the Exeter diocese"

may be taken; extracts from these have been printed not long ago by Prebendary Hingeston Randolph, in the Register of Bishop Stapeldon. The record of these Visitations comprises the first fifteen years of the fourteenth century; at one place, Colaton, we find the *jurati* depose that their parson preaches in his own way, and on the Sundays expounds the Gospels, as well as he can (*quatenus novit*)! He does not give them much instruction (*non multum eos informat*), they think, in "the articles of faith, the Ten Commandments, and the deadly sins." At another place, the priest, one Robert Blond, "preaches, but," as appears to the witnesses, "not sufficiently clearly;" but they add, as if conscious of some hypercriticism, that they had long been accustomed to pastors who instructed them most carefully in all that pertained to the salvation of their souls. But these are perhaps the least satisfactory cases. In most instances the priest is said to instruct his people "well" (*bene*), and "excellently" (*optime*), and the truth of the testimony appears more clearly in places where, in other things, the parish-folk do not consider that their priest was quite perfection; as, for instance, at Culmstock, where the vicar, Walter, is said to be too long over the Matins and Mass on feasts; or still more at at St. Mary Church, where the people think that in looking after his worldly interests, their priest was somewhat too hard on them in matters of tithe.

The Register from which these details are taken is a mere accidental survival, but the point which it is of importance to remember is this: that during Catholic times, in the course of every few years the clergy were thus personally reported upon, so to say, to the chief pastor or his delegates,

and the oaths of the witnesses is a proof of how gravely this duty was regarded. And here may be noted, in passing, a fact not realized nor even understood, namely, that one of the great differences between ecclesiastical life in the Middle Ages and modern times lies in the fact that then people had no chance "of going to sleep." There was a regular system of periodical Visitations, and everything was brought to the test of inquiry of a most elaborate and searching kind, in which every corner, so to speak, was swept out.

In this special instance, before passing on, attention may be called to the manifest intelligence, in spiritual things, shown by these jurors—peasants and farmers—in out-of-the-way parishes of clod-hopping Devon, in the early years of the fourteenth century.

To assist priests in the preparation of these familiar discourses, manuals of all kinds were drawn up in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is impossible here to do more than give the names of a few of the best known. They are (1) The *Pars Oculi Sacerdotis*, by William Pagula, or Parker. (2) The *Pupilla Oculi*, by John de Burgo, Rector of Collingham in A.D. 1385 (3) The *Regimen Animarum*, compiled about 1343. (4) The *Speculum Christiani*, by John Walton. (5) The *Flos Florum*, etc. All these, and many others like them, may be called popular books of instruction. Besides these, of course, there are a multitude of theological text-books, all calculated to aid the clergy in what the great Grosseteste calls "as much a part of the *cura pastoralis* as the administration of the Sacraments."

In the same way that the work of instruction proper took a fixed form, so that of preaching was fashioned on a well-

understood and well-recognized model. A short exordium, following upon the chosen text of Scripture, led almost invariably to a prayer for Divine guidance and assistance, which concluded with the *Pater* and *Ave*, and only then did the preacher address himself to the development of his subject. For the most part, until comparatively recent times, which have introduced somewhat strange themes into the sacred pulpit, the sermon was based almost entirely upon the Bible, and generally upon the Gospel or other Scripture proper for the day. This practice, whilst it imbued the minds of those who listened with a thorough knowledge of the sacred writings, gives the sermons, as we read them now, so great a similarity that we are apt to regard them as generally dull and uninteresting. With rare exceptions it is clear that, in England at least, brilliant, startling, and sensational sermonizing was not regarded with favour, but, on the contrary, was looked on with suspicion, as savouring of the "treatise" or method of the schools, and founded on the practice of heretics.

Surveying the ground of parochial preaching, one or two facts seem to stand out from the background of much that is still vague and uncertain. First, it is certain that popular and vernacular teaching was by no means neglected by the parish priests in pre-Reformation pulpits. Next to this is the prominence given to homely and familiar instruction, as distinct from formal sermons, and the importance which in those days was attached to the constant reiteration of the same old, yet ever new, lessons of faith and practice. On the part of the people hearing of sermons was taught as a duty, and they had to examine their consciences as to

whether they had tried to shirk the obligation. As Myrc puts it—

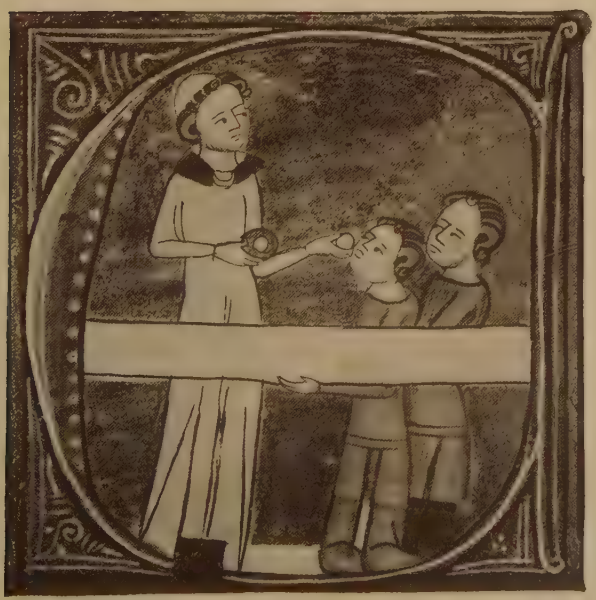
> "Has thou wythowte devocyone
> I-herde any predicacyon?
> Hast thou gon or setten else where
> When thou myghtest have ben there?"

Besides the sermon, which followed upon the reading or singing of the Gospel in the Mass, there were several other Sunday practices connected with the pulpit. First may be mentioned the reading of the *Bede-roll*. This was of two kinds, general and particular, and Dr. Rock has printed an interesting specimen of the first and several examples of the second. From the first a few quotations will make the nature and intention of the Church in the "Bidding of Bedes" quite clear. It begins—

"Masters and frendes, as for holy dayes and fasting days ye shall have none thys weke" (of course, when there were any they were named), "but ye maye doe all manner of good workes, that shall bee to the honoure of God and the profyt of your own soules. And therefore, after a laudable consuetude and lawfull custome of our mother holy Churche, ye shall knele down movyng your heartes unto Almightye God, and makyng your speciall prayers for the three estates, concerning all christian people, that is to say for the spiritualtye and temporaltie and the soules being in the paynes of purgatory."

Then after mentioning the Pope, the metropolitan, the bishop, and parish priests "having cure of mannes soule," and in the "temporalty" the king, queen, and royal family, with the lords, etc., the priest from the pulpit recommended to the people's prayers all those "that have honoured the church wyth light, lamp, vestment, or bell, or any ornaments,

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION



YOUTHS RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

by the whyche the service of Almighty God is the better maintained and kept."

After this, prayers were asked for all workers and tillers of the earth; for the fruits and for proper weather for them; for those in "debt or deadly sin," that God may free them; for the sick and for all pilgrims; and "for women that be in our ladyes bondes, that Almighty God may send them grace, the child to receive the sacrament of baptism, and the mother purification. Also ye shall praye for the good man or woman, that this daye geveth bread to make the holy lofe, and for all those that fyrste began it, and them that longest continue."

The priest then turned towards the altar for the *Pater* and *Ave* with the psalm *Deus misereatur*, etc., and these being finished, he turned once more towards the people and said—

"Thirdly, ye shall pray for your frends' soules, as your father's soule, your mother's soule, your brethren's soule, your sister's soul, your godfather's soule, your godmother's soul, and for all those souls whose bones rest in this church and churchyard, . . . and above all, for those soules whose names be accustomed to be rehearsed in the bederoll as I shall rehearse them unto you by the grace of God."

Then followed the reading of the names from the bede-roll, one specimen of which has been preserved by the antiquary Hearne, and which, he says, is drawn up on a large octavo leaf of vellum, and contains merely a series of names, at the end of which is the formula: "God have mercy on these souls and of all Crystyn soules."

This catalogue of names, sometimes called the "Dominical Roll," was the shortened form for ordinary occasions, but on

certain days, such as "All Saints' day," there was in the case of benefactors a longer form, which set forth the individual reasons why the people should specially remember these dead in their prayers. For entering the names on this roll, a fee was paid to the parson by the parish; thus at Laverton, in 1521, there is the entry in the churchwardens' accounts: "Fee to William Wright, the parish priest, for entering the names of Thomas Greste, Agnes his wife, and John and William their children, on the bede-roll."

As examples of the longer form of proclamation may be given an entry already cited on the bede-roll of St. Michael's, Cornhill, which runs thus—

"You must pray—for Richard Atfield, sometime parish parson of this church, for he with the consent of the Bishop ordained and established Matins, High Mass, and Even-song, to be sung daily in the year 1375."

Or the following from the Laverton account—

"The suit of red purple velvet vestments were given by Sir John Wright, parson, son of William Wright and Elizabeth, for the which you shall specially pray for the souls" of the above, etc., "and for all benefactors as well as them that be off lyve as be departed to the mercy of God, for whose lives and soules is given heyr to the honour of God, His most blessed mother our Lady Saynt Mare and all His saints being in Heaven and the blessed matron Saynte Helene—and they to be usyd at such principal feasts and times as it shall please ye curates, as long as they shall last—for all these souls and all Christian souls ye shall say one *Pater noster*."

In many instances it was apparently the curate's duty to read the parish bede-roll, and the stipend he received for performing this service was part of his benefice. In other

cases, a fee was paid to the parson on the day when the roll was read. Thus at St. Mary-at-Hill, in 1490, there is a payment by the wardens, entered as follows: "*Item.* To Mr. John Redy for rehersyng of the bederoll, 8*d*." One purpose served by thus keeping the memory of the good deeds of parishioners who had passed away, before the memory of their successors, was that it stimulated the latter to emulate the example of these benefactors. Bishop Hobhouse is obviously right when he says that popular bounty was undoubtedly elicited by hearing the names of the doers of past generous deeds read out in church on great days. All, in pre-Reformation days, appear to have been anxious, according to their means, to find a place on this roll of honour.

Very similar to this bede-roll was what was known as the "Quethe-word," for which fees are recorded so often as having been paid. Apparently this was the announcement of the death of a parishioner made for the first time after his decease. The fee for the speaking of this "Quethe-word" was usually paid by the wardens of the parish, but possibly only when bequests had been made by the deceased to the "common stock" of the parish.

Besides this kind of Sunday notice, the pulpit was the means by which all manner of ecclesiastical or quasi-ecclesiastical business was notified. In the first place, of course, the banns of intended marriages were published on three successive Sundays and feast days. Then such warnings to parents were given as reminding them of the necessity of seeing that their children receive Confirmation, with the information that the bishop would either be in the church or in the

neighbourhood at such a time. The Council of Oxford ordered that parish priests were frequently to warn parents from the pulpit about this duty of not delaying to bring up their children to the bishop.

Then there were constant appeals being made for assistance of some kind or other, generally of a public or semi-public character, supported by an indulgence, or grant of spiritual favours from the bishop. To take an example: some time about 1270, Walter Langton, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, wrote a letter on behalf of a work, for which one John Perty was collecting. John Perty was the procurator and collector of the bridge at or near Colwich, and he was trying to get money to repair, or rather to rebuild, the bridge and its chapel, and at the same time to gather sufficient endowment to maintain a priest. The bishop asks all his priests to explain the matter from their pulpits, to show that it was a work of charity, and to say that to all who contribute in any way he grants forty days of indulgence under the usual conditions.

The same bishop at another time orders all rectors and parish priests to publish "at the time of their sermons and exhortations" his indulgence to all who would visit the cathedral church of Lichfield and contribute to the building of the spires of his cathedral. Other episcopal letters, which were all to be read in the parish churches, were of a more private character. One man, for instance, had suffered great losses through a fire, which had destroyed his house; another had had his barns burned; a third had been left almost destitute by having his crops destroyed by floods; a fourth had been plundered by robbers; a fifth had suffered the loss

of an arm, etc. In all such cases, if those who asked could prove that their needs were genuine, the bishop had not apparently much hesitation in granting letters of indulgence to those who would help in these Christian charities; and all such letters became matter for the Sunday parish pulpit.

Then, it was in the church that all laws, civil as well as ecclesiastical, were published. Here, too, notice of all manner of civil proceedings was made. A, for instance, had died and been laid to rest in the churchyard; it is from the pulpit of his parish church that the fact is announced that he has left B and E the executors of his will, and people are notified to send in their claims, or pay what is owing to the estate to these two. Or it may be that A has died intestate, or that those he has appointed to carry out his wishes will not do so, in which cases people are to be warned that the bishop's official will administer the estate, and all claims are to be sent in to him.

Then all questions of social order and well-being, as well as infraction of law in the district, came before the people in some form or other in the church and from the pulpit.

"When Agnes Paston," for example, "built a wall (across a property to which the people claimed access), it was thrown down before it was half completed, and threats of heavy amercements (says Dr. Gairdner) were addressed to her in church, and the men of Paston spoke of showing their displeasure when they went in public procession on St. Mark's day."

So, also, the parish priest of Standon, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, was ordered to publish an excommunication under the following circumstances: Margaret Basun, a parishioner, was charged by some people with having stolen a

silver ring belonging to Alice Stanmer, and with having sold it to Anne Bagbie. Margaret Susan denied the truth, and was called to make canonical purgation before the bishop. She did so, and the bishop, having heard the case, declared her innocent of the charge, and ordered her innocence to be proclaimed, and an excommunication to be pronounced against those who had defamed her.

To take another sample case: a man spread false stories about the approaches of his father, saying that they had been the thieves of some goods, etc., which had been stolen. An examination by the bishop revealed the fact that it was the accuser who was in reality the robber, and it was proved that he had made a false key, had opened his father's chest, and taken from it money and jewels. The bishop directed that this should be told the people on the following Sunday.

Once more: a person has been much defamed in his parish by people saying he had buried a child in his back garden. He denied this charge utterly, and the denial was published to the people from the pulpit, whilst his accusers were warned to come before the bishop and oppose his purgation. Or, lastly: John Spencer, the official of the Archdeacon of Lincoln, issued a letter to be read in the parish church, in which he declares that he has had before him Alice B. and Matilda S. The former had defamed the latter by calling her a *meretrix*. On examination this was found to be untrue, and Matilda S. was declared innocent. Alice B. is to be compelled to cease these injuries, and to pay all the expenses.

Another set of proclamations which had to be made on the Sunday from the parish pulpit were the excommunications pronounced by the bishop or by some other authority.

In the Register of Bishop Bronescombe is a document, dated November 24, 1277, pronouncing two people of good family excommunicated for living together without being rightly married. The fact is notorious, and "the keys of the Church are vilely despised," and this contempt may be hurtful to ecclesiastical authority if allowed to continue. For this reason the bishop's sentence of excommunication is ordered to be published in every church and chapel. A second instance may be taken from Bishop Grandisson's Register for 1335. It appears that one John Hayward, the bailiff of Plympton Priory, for some reason not apparent, took sanctuary in the church of Sutton. Despising the sanctity of the place, some people unknown broke down the doors of the church, and, dragging the unfortunate man from his place of safety, wounded him, and even broke both his thighs. The bishop consequently orders the sentence of greater excommunication to be pronounced upon the unknown criminals, "with bell and candle," in all churches.

Other instances of excommunications published from the church pulpit are: (1) For detaining "charters, rolls, indentures, bills, evidences, and other muniments," which had to do with the right of a man's succession to the estate of his father. The persons holding the documents are unknown, and so all who have them, or are assisting in concealing them, are excommunicated after fifteen days. (2) For stealing a trap to catch eels, set in a pool called in English "a leap," and throwing it into a pool in the town of C, belonging to the Prior of O. (3) For laying violent hands on a priest, who was known to be one by his dress and tonsure. (4) For breaking into the room of Thomas, rector of a London parish.

The room was, by the way, in the Campanile, and the thieves took clothes, gold, and silver to the value of 40*s.*, etc.

As a final instance of this kind of denunciation, an incident recorded in Bishop Grandisson's Register for 1348 may be given. There had been, the bishop says, much talk, and many complaints had reached his ears about a woman named Margery Kytel, who exercised magic arts, and was regarded as a witch. He (the bishop) had cited her to appear to answer the charge; but she had not done so. The major excommunication is ordered to be pronounced against her, and all people in every church and chapel are to be warned, under the same penalty, not to have anything to do with her, still less to consult this "phitonessa demonica."

A further class of parish notices were the citations of principles and witnesses to ecclesiastical courts. For instance, on February 19, 1426, an order was given to the chaplain who served the chapel of Baddesley to cite those who had acted as executors of the wills of John Barkeby and Juliana Power, for having done so without the leave of the Bishop of Coventry. In answer to this, John West, Vicar of Pollesworth, certifies that he has published the citation, and that Nicholas Power, the son of the above-named Juliana, had acted as her executor and that of John Barkeby. As a second example may be given the case of a rector of a parish church in Staffordshire, who was ordered to cite two of his parishioners, Thomas Grenegore and his wife, for keeping a bad house in the parish, to appear at the prebendal church of Eccleshall on August 10, 1426, "to receive correction for the good of their souls." Of much the same kind is the letter of William, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, in 1441, which

recites that Thomas, son of Richard Tomlynson, of Marchington, in the county of Stafford, on September 6, 1420, broke into Sudbury church and stole three chalices, two vestments worth £10, one breviary, a surplice, and two curtains, the property of the churchwardens. The said Thomas, having been captured by the secular power, had been handed over to the ecclesiastical authorities, and this letter was to be published in the church of Sudbury, to summon witnesses to appear at the bishop's court.

Connected with this phase of parochial life were the public penances which had to be performed in the parish churches. In the comparatively rare instances of people convicted as heretics, the punishment was so severe that, in these days, it must cause astonishment that they were submitted to so quietly. For such a cause the penitent had to walk barefooted and dressed only in underclothing, bearing a bundle of faggots, in the Sunday procession for three successive Sundays. During the course of the passage of the clergy and people through the churchyard, the priest was to give certain disciplines (*fustigaciones*), and the penitent was then to kneel at the entrance of the chancel during Mass, with the faggot in front, and holding a candle in one hand. Other public ecclesiastical punishments were hardly less severe. I. de B., for example, in the fourteenth century, was condemned to undergo six public whippings (*fustigaciones*) on six Sundays before the procession in his parish church, for having violently beaten a cleric. In the fifteenth century, for a grave offence a person was enjoined to go round the market-place of Marlborough on two market days *nudus usque ad camisiam et braccas*, and to be whipped by a priest at each corner.

This kind of penance, however, was not confined to the laity. There are instances of clergy being made to do public penances even in their own parish churches. For instance, the rector of the church of O., being convicted before the bishop of a crime, was sentenced to stand bareheaded at the font for three Sundays during High Mass. He was to be vested in surplice and stole, and to read his Psalter. He was then to go as a penitential pilgrim to Lincoln, Canterbury, and Beverley, and at each to offer a candle, and to bring back a testimonial letter that this had been faithfully done.

To take one or two further examples of these public penances in church. (1) A man convicted of the sin of incontinence, which has been a scandal, is condemned to walk with bare feet and bareheaded before his parish priest in the procession on two solemn feast days. (2) A woman convicted of unchastity, publicly known, is sentenced to "three fustigacions round the parish church in the usual penitential way, *sola camisia duntaxat induta.* She is to hold a wax candle of half a pound in weight from the beginning of Mass till the Offertory, when it is to be offered to the image in the chancel. This is to be done on three Sundays, and if the condemned refuse to undergo the punishment, she is then to be excommunicated, and is to be publicly proclaimed as such on each feast day till she repent and undergo her penance.

CHAPTER XI

PARISH AMUSEMENTS

NOTWITHSTANDING that the parish was instituted primarily for ecclesiastical objects, the people quickly came to understand the utility of the organization for common and social purposes. Although it was not till well into the sixteenth century that any successful attempt was made to impose by law upon the parishioners, as such, any purely secular duty, such as the care of local roads and bridges, or the repair of ditches, dykes, and sluices, the people's wardens had long before this assumed the superintendence of all the common parochial amusements, and in some instances of works, such as brewing and baking, etc., undertaken for the common benefit or profit. These probably mostly sprang out of their necessary management of parochial property, which had a natural tendency to grow in extent, and in particular of the "Church House," which in one form or other most parishes possessed.

The *Church House.*—Mr. J. M. Cowper, in his preface to the *Accounts of the Churchwardens of St. Dunstan's, Canterbury*, gives a useful description of the purposes for which the *Church*, or, as it was sometimes called, the *Parish, House* existed. In the fifteenth century, and indeed before that,

the church was the real centre of all parochial life, social as well as religious. "From the font to the grave the greater number of people lived within the sound of its bells. It provided them with all the consolations of religion, and linked itself with such amusements as it did not directly supply."

CHURCH HOUSE, LINCOLN

Parish meetings not unfrequently settled local disputes. Thus at Canterbury in 1485, at St. Dunstan's, there was some dispute between the parish and a man named Baker, and the churchwardens spent 2½*d.* on arbitration. Later on, two families fell out, and the vicar and four parishioners met in council, heard the parties, and put an end to the difficulty.

A parish, with all the great interests involved in its proper management, required some place where parish meetings could be held. They were sometimes, no doubt, held in the aisle of the parish church, but this arrangement was for obvious reasons inconvenient, and a Church house became a necessity. Its existence was apparently almost universal. At Hackney, for instance, the parish built a house in which to hold meetings. At Yatton, in Somerset, in 1445, the people subscribed to the building of their house; at Tintinhull, in the same county, one was completed in 1497; but in 1531, another was erected to take the place of the older one, and Thomas, Prior of Montacute, helped the parish with a donation of twenty shillings.

The Church house was sometimes let out to tenants and for various purposes, with a reservation of its use when necessary for parochial meetings. Thus, at Wigtoft, the rent of the house brought in a regular sum of money to the churchwardens. At Straton, in the county of Cornwall, it was let on occasion; as, for instance, in 1513, the accounts show a receipt of 8*d.* "of Richard Rowell for occupying of the Church house;" and of 12*d.* "of the paynters for working in the Church house." At the annual fair time the Church house was let to wandering merchants to display their goods. At St. Mary's, Dover, in 1537, an item of parochial receipt was, "one whole year's farme of the churche house in Broad St., 5 shillings."

Sometimes there was land belonging to the parish, which was let together with the house; as, for example, at Cratfield, where, in 1534, an acre of land was let with the "Church house." Very probably this was the land on which

subsequently the parish shooting-butts were erected. If there were receipts to the parish, there were, of course, also expenses for repairs to the common house, which in some accounts appear to be very frequent, and which shows probably that it was much used. In one or two instances there seems to have been two floors to the house, and in one of these instances these were let out separately, one of the two tenants being a woman.

In many cases it is clear that cooking was done on the premises for the parish meetings. In some Wiltshire accounts there is evidence of this, and of utensils of various kinds being kept in the house for parochial feasting and for ministering to the poor. The householders made merry and collected money for church purposes, and the younger people had dancing and bowls in many places, "while the ancients sat gravely by." At St. Dunstan's, in Canterbury, there were two dozen trenchers and spoons, and one annual dinner is mentioned.

Dr. Jessop thus speaks of these Church houses—

"Frequently, indeed, one may say usually, there was a church house, a kind of parish club, in which the gilds held their meetings and transacted their business. Sometimes this Church-house was called the Gild hall; for you must not make the mistake of thinking that the Church houses were places of residence for the clergy. Nothing of the kind. The Church house or Gild hall grew up as an institution which had become necessary when the social life of the parish had outgrown the accommodation which the church could afford, and when, indeed, there was just a trifle too much boisterous merriment and too little seriousness and sobriety to allow of the assemblies being held in the church at all. The Church-house in many places became one of the most important

buildings in a parish, and in the little town of Dereham, in Norfolk, the Church-house or Gild hall is still, I think, the largest house in the town. When the great fire took place at Dereham, in 1581, which destroyed almost the whole town, the Gild hall or Church house, from being well built of stone, was almost the only building in the place which escaped the terrible conflagration."

The owners of the Church house, or "Court house," as it was sometimes called, were, of course, the churchwardens, as trustees of the parishioners, and they made all the necessary arrangements to let or lease it. At Berkhampstead "they always reserved to themselves the right of using the great loft, "which apparently occupied the whole upper story, as well at other times as when they kept the feast. It was in this common hall, evidently, that some of the property of the parish was kept ready for use. At Pilton, in Somerset, for example, there is mentioned "a slegge to break stones at the quarey;" and the "eight tabyle clothes" point to parish dinners.

One of the ways of eliciting good-will among the parishioners, and also of making a profit for the common chest, was the "church ale." This was a parish meeting at which cakes and small beer were purchased from the churchwardens, and consumed for the good of the parish. No doubt there were amusements of various kinds during the *potatio*, and there was generally a collection. At Cratfield, for instance, in 1490, the chief source of income was from the "church ales." There were about five of these parish feasts held in each year, and one of them was instituted by a parishioner, William Brews, who left nine shillings in his will for that purpose. Very commonly a collection for the

expenses of the common amusements was made by the working men on the first Monday after Twelfth night—the first Monday of work after the Christmas holidays. They drew a plough round to the various houses, asking for donations, and from this the day became known as "Plough Monday."

Mr. Peacock, in the *Archæological Journal* (vol. xl.), has given some interesting particulars he has been able to gather about the village "ales." The drink itself was apparently a sweet beverage made with hops or bitter herbs. It was not the same as the more modern beer; but was less heavy, and hardly an intoxicant. The meeting was by no means devoid of the religious aspect, and to some extent its purpose and connection with the church secured this. Cups were used which were frequently dedicated, especially the general or loving cup, to saints. At Boston there was a tankard named after St. Thomas. Archbishop Scrope, of York, attached an indulgence to one such cup: "unto all them that drinks of this cope X days of pardon." In these days, no doubt, such a curious mingling of things sacred and profane will appear incongruous; but in the Middle Ages Christian life was a much simpler organization than it became after the days of Henry VIII. Religion was before that period a part of the people's daily life, and its influence overflowed into all the social amusements of the people. As already pointed out, the authority of the Church settled most of the minor difficulties, disputes, and quarrels of the nation without the assistance of the State. Its vitality was everywhere visible. Justices of the peace and police magistrates were then wholly unknown. The manor court and the parson in his Sunday pulpit settled everything. So, too, the "ales" were

under the protection of the Church, and took place with its distinct encouragement.

Mr. Peacock thus sketches the probable appearance of one of these halls for holding the "church ale"—

"We must picture to ourselves a long, low room with an ample fireplace, or rather a big open chimney occupying one end with a vast hearth. Here the cooking would be done, and the water boiled for brewing the church ale. There would be, no doubt, a large oak table in the middle, with benches around, and a lean-to building on one side to act as a cellar."

Just as all the churches were made beautiful by religious paintings, so probably the Church house—the people's hall—was made gay and bright with decoration, permanent or temporary.

At these Church feasts there was an important factor—the collection. Dr. Jessop speaks about this feature of parochial life—

"Among the most profitable sources of revenue known to the wardens were the great festive entertainments called the *Church ales*. They have almost their exact counterparts in our modern *public dinners* for charitable (?) purposes, such as the annual dinner for the literary fund, or for the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy; and the *public teas* so common among the Nonconformist bodies. They were held in the Church houses, which were well furnished with all the necessary appliances for cooking, brewing, and for giving accommodation for a large company. Often a generous parishioner would provide a bullock or a sheep or two for the entertainment, and another good-natured man would offer a quarter of malt to be brewed for the occasion. The skins of the slaughtered sheep are often entered on the credit side of the accounts, and occasionally smaller contributions of spices and other condiments were offered.

Of course, the inevitable collection followed; and, according to the goodness of the feast, the number of the guests, or their satisfaction with the arrangements made, the amount of donations was large or small."

To take an example or two of these collections: at Walberswick, in the county of Suffolk, in 1453, the "church ales" produced 13*s.* 4*d.*; at Bishop Stortford, in 1489, two parish gatherings brought in £4 6*s.* 8*d.* to the common exchequer. At times, too, various neighbouring parishes would unite their forces and have a joint church ale. At Yatton, in Somerset, for example, the parishioners both entertained and were entertained by a neighbouring parish; and in the "Book of the accomptes of Bramley church" are entered "in expenses of the parish of Silchester—5*s.*"; "in expenses of the parish of Herteley—2*s.* 4*d.*" At Shire, in the county of Surrey, an ale was held at Pentecost in 18 Henry VII. which produced 56*s.*: of this sum Albury contributed 12*s.*, Wotton 5*s.*, Abinger 5*s.*, and Ewhurst 6*s.* 8*d.* Out of this sum, 17*s.* 5*d.* was expended over the provisions for the feast, and the residue was the amount available for the common fund. In 1536, in the same place, there is an example of a private entertainment given for the benefit of the parish. Thus was "a drinking made by John Redford at his own expense, from strangers attending at his instance, £7 3*s.* 4*d.*" In the parish at Bramley there were apparently a whole series of dinners and suppers in the week of Whitsuntide. These are worth giving in full, as they have not previously been printed.

Receipts.

1531–2. Kyng ale on White Sunday, 10*s.* 9*d.*—at soppar, 20*s.* 7*d.*
On Monday at dinner, 2*s.*—at suppar, 10*s.* 7*d.*

On Tuesday at dinner, 6*s.* 9*d.*
On the said Tuesday of the parish of Pamber, 4*s.*
On the said Tuesday of the parish of Strathfieldsay, 9*s.*
On the said Tuesday at supper, 10*s.* 6*d.*
On the Wednesday at dinner, 13*s.* 6*d.*
Received for calf and sheep skin, 21*d.*
At supper on Trinity Sunday, 12*s.* 6*d.*
For tapping money, 7*s.* 6*d.*

The payments made by the wardens for the above series of entertainments are—

Towards the Kyng ale to Alys Carter 6 bushells whete, 6*s.* 4*d.*
To Mr. Vycar for 3 bushells whete, 3*s.*
8 barrells of bere, 13*s.* 8*d.*
To John Redyng for 2 calves, 6*s.* 8*d.*
To Richard Tyrry for 1 calf, 2*s.* 8*d.*
To William Littlework for 2 wethers, 5*s.* 5*d.*
To Henry Whyte for a barren ewe and 3 lambs, 7*s.*
For geese and pyg with hare, 17*d.*
To Hugh Carter's wife for chekyns, 6*d.*
Anne Acre for butter and eggs, 6*d.*
For woode, 21*d.*
For mynstrell, 20*d.*
For rushes and making clene the barn, 3*d.*
For spices, 4*d.*
To Symon Redyng and his wife (and his moder above), 12*d.*

Hock-days.—In many parishes there was a feast celebrated, according to some, in memory of the massacre of the Danes in A.D. 1002. It was called *Hock-day* and *Hock-tyde*, and seems to have been specially the women's feast

in the parish. The second Monday and Tuesday after Easter were the Hock-tyde days, on which, with some sportive traditional customs, money was collected for parish purposes. According to an early custom, women seized and bound men and then demanded a small payment for their release. This seems to have been prohibited, and then recourse was had to stopping roadways and bridges with ropes, and demanding a toll from all men who desired to pass. For example, at Shire in Surrey in 1530, 8*s.* are entered in the accounts, as coming "from the collection of pennies by the married women on Hokmonday." In the accounts of St. Mary the Great, Cambridge, in 1518, there are two entries of receipt for Hockday money: "*Item* Receyved of Mistres Sabyn, Mistress Butt, Mistres Halbed and other wyfys of money gathered by them on Hockmonday—20 shillings . . . and *Memorandum* that there remayneth in the hands of Kateryn Hawes in halfpenys of the gatheryng on Hockmonday—2*s.* 4*d.*" So also in the accounts of St. Mary-at-Hill, London, for 1511–12, there is this item: "*Receivid* of the Gadryng of hok monday by the wemen 20*s.*: *Rec.* of the Gadryng on Tewysday 4*s.*" In the parish of SS. Edmund and Thomas, Salisbury, the women paid a composition to escape "binding" on the Tuesday of Hocktide. In the year 1499–1500, for example, there is the following entry in the accounts: "*Receivid* of divers wives and maidens to save them from binding in Hok Tuesday in all the year, 5 shillings." In another account we learn that the "maidens" kept a bridge over which all had to pass on this Hock Monday, and that they gathered much in the way of fees for passengers. It may be here remarked that in the way of raising money for parish work, or, in

particular, for the beautifying of their churches, the women-folk were in no ways behind the men. There are constant notices of gifts, etc., in the parish accounts; and such entries as one at Walberswick in Suffolk, in 1496: "By a gaderyng of the wyves in the towne for a glass wyndow, 9 shillings," are common features in the mediæval accounts.

The women-folk also had their feast at the Church house on certain days when the parish came together for the purpose of dancing. In 1538, at Salisbury, there is a receipt from the "wyves daunce." At St. Ewen's, Bristol, there was special "dancing money," and at Croscombe in Somerset an item of receipt of 6*s.* in 1483 is said to be collected "of the wives' dancing." Another form of collection by women in some places was called "Robin Hood penny."

In some parishes the supplying of the ale, etc., for the parish entertainments no doubt led to the churchwardens becoming purveyors of ale, etc., at other times, the profits obtained by this trading going to swell the parish receipts. Bishop Hobhouse remarks upon this in the case of Tintinhull, a Somerset parish. The church house was the focus of the social life in this neighbourhood. There was, at first, a small place for making the sacred wafer and the "blessed bread." It grew by degrees into a bakery to supply all. Then brewing was added, and the sale of ale to those who wanted it. Apparently the bakery and the brewing utensils were let out to those who wanted to make their own bread and beer; but in the reign of Henry VII. a proper house was procured by the parish, and a woman, "Agnes Cook," was placed in it to manage the increasing business.

At Bishop Stortford and elsewhere, also, there is evidence

in the accounts of brewing being carried on for the benefit of the parish. In some cases, the purchases of malt are considerable, and suggests that the production of ale was for sale generally to any in the parish.

Probably no single book gives such a vivid picture of the social side of mediæval parochial life as the *Durham Halmote Rolls*, published by the "Surtees Society."

"It is hardly a figure of speech," writes Mr. Booth, in the preface to this volume, "to say we have in (these rolls) village life photographed. The dry record of tenures is peopled by men and women who occupied them, whose acquaintance we make in these records under the various phases of village life. We see them in their tofts surrounded by their crofts, with their gardens of pot-herbs. We see how they ordered the affairs of the village, when summoned by the bailiff to the vill to consider matters which affected the common weal of the community. We hear of their trespasses and wrong-doings, and how they were remedied or punished; of their strifes and contentions, and how they were repressed; of their attempts, not always ineffective, to grasp the principle of co-operation as shown by their by-laws; of their relations with the Prior, who represented the convent, and alone stood in relation of lord. He appears always to have dealt with his tenants, either in person or through his officers, with much consideration; and in the imposition of fines we find them invariably tempering justice with mercy."

In fact, as the picture of mediæval village life among the tenants of the Durham monastery is displayed in the pages of this interesting volume, it would seem almost as if one was reading of some Utopia of dreamland. Many of the things that in these days advanced politicians would desire to see introduced into the village communities of modern England, to relieve the deadly dulness of country life, were

seen in Durham and Cumberland in full working order in pre-Reformation days. Local provisions for public health and general convenience are evidenced by the watchful vigilance of the village officials over the water supplies, the care taken to prevent the fouling of useful streams, and stringent by-laws as to the common place for clothes-washing, and the times for emptying and cleansing ponds and mill-dams. Labour was lightened and the burdens of life eased by co-operation on an extensive scale. A common mill ground the corn, and the flour was baked into bread at a common oven. A common smith worked at a common forge, and common shepherds and herdsmen watched the sheep and cattle of various tenants, which were pastured on the fields common to the whole village community. The pages of the volume contain numerous instances of the kindly consideration for their tenants which characterized the monastic proprietors, and the relation between them was rather that of rentchargers than of men claiming absolute ownership. In fact, as the editor of the volume says—

"Notwithstanding the rents, duties, and services, and the fine paid on entering, the inferior tenants of the Prior had a beneficial interest in their holdings, which gave rise to a recognized system of tenant-right, which we may see growing into a customary right; the only limitation of the tenant's right being inability, from poverty or other cause, to pay rent or perform the accustomed services."

When the monastery of Durham was suppressed and its place of the Cathedral Prior and Monks taken by a Dean and Chapter, it was found, by the middle of Elizabeth's reign, that the change was gravely detrimental to the interests of

the tenants, and the new body soon made it plain that they had no intention of respecting prescriptive rights. This appears clearly in a document printed in the same volume, about which the editor says—

"A review of the Halmote Rolls leaves no room for doubt that the tenants, other than those of the demesne lands, during the period covered by the text, had a recognized tenant-right in their holdings, which was ripening into a customary freehold estate; and we might have expected to find, in the vills or townships in which the Dean and Chapter possessed manorial rights, the natural outcome of this tenant-right in the existence of copyhold or customary freehold estates at the present time, as we find in the manors of the see of Durham. It is a well-known fact, however, that there are none. The reason is, that soon after the foundation of the Cathedral body, the Dean and Chapter refused to recognize a customary estate in their tenants."

The presence of "minstrels" at parish dinners and feasts has already been noticed. It is probable that these musicians were more frequently employed to enliven "the deadly dulness of village life" than might now be supposed. At Tatton, from which many of these illustrations have been taken, the payments for "minstrels" in the sixteenth century come very regularly into the parish accounts; and it seems hardly very far-fetched to suggest that these musicians probably went from one parish feast-day to another, as at the present day the brass band goes from one village club-day celebration to another.

A word may be usefully said about the effect of religion on the family life generally. Regularity of attendance at all religious celebrations in the church was universal, or

practically so. This was the case, not on account of any ecclesiastical compulsion—although, in case of need, it could be, and no doubt was exerted—but, as far as it is possible to judge, the church services were attended and religious duties fulfilled, as part of the Christian life which all desired to follow, and in deference to a healthy public opinion which, in these matters, did not admit of backsliding.

The father's and the mother's duty of bringing up their children to know God's law and to keep it, was fully understood.

"Every man and woman," says the author of *Dives and Pauper*, "after his degree, is bound to do his business to know God's law that he is bound to keep. And fathers, mothers, godfathers and godmothers be bound to teach their children God's law or else do them to be taught.

"St. Austin saith that each man in his own household should do the office of bishop in teaching and correcting of common things, and therefore saith the law that the office of teaching and chastising belongeth not only to the bishop but to every governor after his manner and his degree: to the poor man governing his poor household; to the rich man governing his folk; to the husband governing his wife; to the father and mother governing their children."

Filial affection was strongly inculcated in the common teachings. In a will of one John Sothil of Dewsbury, in 1500, is expressed the last wish of one who had evidently been brought up to reverence his own parents. "Also I pray, Thomas my son, in my name and for the love of God, that he never strive with his moder, as he will have my blessing, for he shall find her curtous to del with."

Grace with meals—before and after—was not only the

law, but the practice. To ask God's blessing over what His bounty had provided, and to thank Him afterwards, was an elementary duty of all living the Christian life. Children were taught the importance of associating God and His providence with their meals, and, as in so many other matters, instruction was conveyed in some simple rhymes like—

> "He that without grace sitteth down to eate
> Forgetting to give God thanks for his meate
> And riseth againe letting Grace overpasse
> Sittes down like an oxe and riseth like an asse."

Children were taught to rise early, as the *Babe of Nurture* says—

> "Ryse you early in the morning
> For it hath propertyes three
> Holynesse, health and happy welth,
> As my father taught mee.
> At syxe of the clocke, without delay
> Use commonly to ryse
> And give God thanks for thy good rest
> When thou openest thy eyes."

The young were taught also to pay respect to their elders, and in particular to their parents. They were to be reverential in their manner and to avoid giving them displeasure. The parent, on his part, was to refrain from setting a bad example, but was to see that, the first thing in the morning,—

> "Or he do eny worldli deede,"

his son was to lift up his heart to God, and pray that God may lead him through the day without sin. At the close of the day, after prayers, the child was to be taught to fall asleep thinking of heavenly things: with some such thought as—

"Upon my ryght syde y me laye
Blesid lady to the y prey
For the teres that ye lete
Upon your swete sonnys feete
Send me grace for to slepe
And good dremys for to mete
Slepyng wakyng til morowe daye bee
Our Lorde is the frute, Our Ladye the tree
Blessid be the blossom that sprange lady of thee.
In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen."

The inventories of parish churches and the churchwardens' accounts show how very common a feature the religious plays—"miracle or mystery plays," as they were generally called—were in the village life of the fifteenth century. It requires very little examination of the "books" of those plays that have come down to us to see that these sacred dramas must have been most powerful aids to the religious teaching of the Church among the simple and unlettered villagers of England, and even among the crowds which thronged great cities like Coventry, Chester, and York to witness the traditional acting of the more elaborate performances.

As to their popularity there can be no question. Dramatic representations of the chief events in the life of our Lord, etc., were intimately associated with the religious purposes for which they were originally produced. They were played on Sundays and feast-days, sometimes in the aisles of the churches, in church porches and churchyards. The author of *Dives and Pauper* says—

"Spectacles, plays, and dances that are used on great feasts, as they are done principally for devotion and honest mirth, and to teach men to love God the more, are lawful if the people be

not thereby hindered from God's service, nor from hearing God's word, and provided that in such spectacles and plays there is mingled no error against the faith of Holy Church and good living. All other plays are prohibited, both on holidays and work-days (according to the law), upon which the gloss saith that the representation in plays at Christmas of Herod and the Three Kings, and other pieces of the Gospel, both then and at Easter and other times, is lawful and commendable."

There can be no reasonable doubt that such simple dramatic representations of the chief mysteries of religion and the principal events in our Lord's life, or of some incidents in the lives of the saints, served to impress these truths and fix these events upon the imaginations of the audiences that witnessed them, and to make them in the true sense of the words "vivid realities." The religious drama was the handmaiden of the Church, and it helped to instruct the people at large and, quite as much as the painted wall or pictured window, formed a "book" ever open and easily understood, graphically setting forth and illustrating truths which formed the groundwork of the formal instruction in the Sunday sermon.

Whatever we may in these days be inclined to think of these simple stories as literary works, or however we may be inclined now to smile at some of the "stage situations" and odd characters, there can be no doubt what the people for whom they were written and acted thought. "In great devotion and discretion," says the chronicler, "Higden published the story of the Bible, that the simple people might understand in their own language."

The subjects treated of in these plays were very varied,

although those that were acted on the great festivals of Christmas, Easter, the Ascension, etc., generally had some relation to the mystery then celebrated. In such a collection of plays as that known as the *Towneley Mysteries*, we have examples of the subjects treated of in the religious plays of the period. The collection makes no pretence of being complete, and yet it contains some three and thirty plays, including the Creation, the death of Abel, the story of Noah, the sacrifice of Isaac, and other Old Testament histories; a great number of scenes from the New Testament, such as the Annunciation, the Visitation, Cæsar Augustus, scenes from the Nativity, the Shepherds, the Magi, etc., as well as various scenes from the Passion and Crucifixion, the Parable of the Talents, etc.

Any one who will take the trouble to read—not skim—the plays as printed in this volume cannot fail to be impressed not only with the vivid picture of the special scenes, but by the extensive knowledge of the Bible which the production of these plays must have imparted to those who listened to them, and by the way that, incidentally, the most important religious truths are conveyed in the crude and rugged verse. Again and again, for instance, the entire dependence of all created things upon the providence of God Almighty is asserted and illustrated. Thus, the confession of God's Omnipotence, put into the mouth of Noah at the beginning of the play of "Noah and his Sons," contains a profession of belief in the Holy Trinity, and a declaration concerning the work of the Three Persons in the world. It describes the creation of the world; the fall of Lucifer; the sin of our first parents, and

their expulsion from Paradise. In the story of Abraham, too, the prayer of the patriarch, with which it begins—

> "Adonai, thou God very,
> Thou hear us when to Thee we call,
> As Thou are He that best may,
> Thou art most succour and help of all,"

gives a complete *resumé* of the Bible history before the days of Abraham, with the purpose of showing that all things are in God's hands and that the complete obedience of all creatures whom He has made is due to Him.

Whatever we may think of these religious dramas now, there can be no doubt that the people in the pre-Reformation days delighted in them, and that they formed one of the most popular features in mediæval parochial life.

CHAPTER XII

GUILDS AND FRATERNITIES

EVERY account of a mediæval parish must necessarily include some description of the work of fraternities and guilds. Although these societies, absolutely speaking, were not existent in every parish, still they were so very general that they may be reckoned certainly as one feature of pre-Reformation parochial life. It is hardly necessary to say much upon the subject of guild origins. Their existence dates from the earliest times, and they probably were one result of the natural desire to realize some of the obvious benefits arising from combination, in carrying out purposes of common utility. As a system of widespread practical institutions, "English guilds," says Mr. Toulmin Smith, who may be regarded as our great authority on this matter, "are older than any kings of England." The oldest of our ancient laws—those, for example, of Alfred, of Athelstan and Ina—assume the existence of guilds, to some one of which, as a matter of course, every one was supposed to belong. The same author thus defines the scope and purpose of the ancient guilds. "They were," he says, "associations of those living in the same neighbourhood, who remembered that they

had as neighbours common obligations.' They were different entirely from modern partnerships or trading companies, for their main characteristic was to set up something higher than personal gain and more materialism as the main object of man's existence, and to make the teaching of love to one's neighbour, not merely accepted as a hollow dogma of morality, but known and felt as a habit of life.

An examination of the existing records leads to a general division of mediæval guilds into two classes—*Craft* or *Trade* Associations and *Religious* Societies; or, as some prefer now to call them, *Social Guilds*. It is with these latter that we are here chiefly concerned. The former, as their name implies, had as the special object of their existence the protection of some kind of work, trade, or handicraft; and in this, for practical purposes, we may include those associations of traders or merchants known under the name of "Guild-Merchants." Such, for instance, were the great Companies of the City of London; and it was in reality the plea that they were trading societies which saved them from the general destruction which overtook all fraternities and associations in the sixteenth century. The division of guilds into the two classes named above is, however, after all, a matter of convenience, rather than a real distinction, grounded on fact. All guilds, no matter for what special purpose they were founded, had the same general characteristic principle of brotherly love and social charity, and no guild, so far as I have been able to discover, was divorced from the ordinary religious observances commonly practised in those days.

In speaking, therefore, of the purposes of what I have

called religious or social guilds, I must not be thought to exclude craft or trade guilds. It is very often supposed that, for the most part, what are called religious guilds existed for the purpose of promoting or encouraging some religious practice, such as attendance at church on certain days; taking part in ecclesiastical processions; the recitation of offices and prayers, and the like. Without doubt there were such societies existing in pre-Reformation days, such as, for example, was the great Guild of Corpus Christi, in York, which counted its members by thousands. But such associations were the exception, not the rule. It is really astonishing to find how small a proportion these *ecclesiastical* or purely religious guilds formed of the whole number of associations known as guilds. The origin of the mistaken notion is obvious.

In mediæval days—that is, in the days when such guilds flourished—the word "religious" had a wider, and in many ways a truer signification than has obtained in later times. Religion was understood to include the exercise of the two commandments of charity—the love of God, and the love of one's neighbour; and the exercises of practical charity, to which guild brethren were bound by their guild statutes, were considered as much religious practices as the attendance at church, or the taking part in any ecclesiastical procession. In these days, as Mr. Brentano, in his essay *On the History and Development of Gilds*, has pointed out, most of the objects, to carry out which the guilds existed, would be called *Social* duties; but then, in mediæval times, they were regarded as objects of Christian charity. "Mutual assistance, the aid of the

poor, of the helpless, the sick, of strangers, pilgrims, and prisoners, the burial of the dead, even the keeping of schools and schoolmasters," and other such-like objects of Christian charity, were held to be "exercises of religion."

By whichever name we prefer to call them, the character and purpose of these mediæval guilds cannot in reality be misunderstood. Broadly speaking, they were the benefit societies and the provident associations of the Middle Ages. They undertook towards their members the duties now frequently performed by burial clubs, by hospitals, by almshouses, and by guardians of the poor. Not infrequently they are found acting for the public good of the community in the mending of roads and in the repair of bridges. They looked to the private good of their members in the same way that insurance companies to-day compensate for loss by fire or accident. The very reason of their existence was to afford mutual aid, and by timely contributions to meet the pecuniary demands which were constantly arising from burials, legal exactions, penal fines, and all other kinds of payments and compensations. Mr. Toulmin Smith thus defines their object: "The early English guild was an institution of local self-help, which, before the poor-laws were invented, took the place, in old times, of the modern Friendly or Benefit Society, but with a higher aim; while it joined all classes together in the care of the needy and for objects of common welfare, it did not neglect the forms and practice of religion, justice, and morality," which, it may be added, was indeed the mainspring of their life and action.

"The Guild lands," writes Mr. Thorold Rogers, "were a very important economical fact in the social condition of early England.

The Guilds were the benefit societies of the time, from which impoverished members could be and were aided. It was an age in which the keeping of accounts was common and familiar. Beyond question, the treasurers of the village Guild rendered as accurate an annual statement to the members of their fraternity as a bailiff did to his lord. . . . It is quite certain that the town and country guilds obviated pauperism in the middle ages, assisted in steadying the price of labour, and formed a permanent centre for those associations which fulfilled the function that in more recent times trade unions have striven to satisfy."

An examination of the various articles of association contained in the returns made into the Chancery in 1389, and other similar documents, shows how wide was the field of Christian charity covered by these "fraternities." First and foremost among such works of religion must be reckoned the burial of the dead, regulations as to which are invariably to be found in all the guild statutes. Then came, very generally, provisions for help to the poor, sick, and aged. In some, assistance was to be given to those who were overtaken by misfortune, whose goods had been damaged or destroyed by fire or flood, or had been diminished by loss or robbery; in others, money was found as a loan to such as needed temporary assistance. In the guild at Ludlow, in Shropshire, for instance, "any good girl of the guild had a dowry provided for her if her father was too poor to find one himself." The "guild-merchant" of Coventry kept a lodging-house with thirteen beds, "to lodge poor folk coming through the land on pilgrimage or other work of charity . . . with a keeper of the house and a woman to wash the pilgrims' feet." A guild at York found beds and attendance for poor strangers, and the Guild of Holy Cross in Birmingham

kept almshouses for the poor in the town. In Hampshire, the guild of St. John at Winchester, which comprised men and women of all sorts and conditions, supported a hospital for the needy and infirm of the city.

Speaking of the poor, Bishop Hobhouse, in his preface to the Somerset churchwardens' accounts, says—

"I can only suppose that the brotherhood tie was so strongly realized by the community (of the parish) that the weaker were succoured by the stronger, as out of a family store. The brotherhood tie was, no doubt, very much stronger then, when the village community was from generation to generation so unalloyed by anything foreign, when all were knit together by one faith and one worship and close kindred, but, further than this, the Guild-fellowship must have enhanced all the other bonds in drawing men to spare their worldly goods as a common stock. Covertly, if not overtly, the guildsman bound himself to help his needy brother in sickness and age, as he expected his fellow-guildsman to do for him in his turn of need; and these bonds, added to a far stronger sense of the duty of children towards aged parents than is now found, did, I conceive, suffice for the relief of the poor, aided only by the direct almsgiving which flowed from the parsonage house, or in favoured localities, from the doles or broken meat of a monastery."

For the purpose of collecting money for parochial needs, the services of the various fraternities were constantly requisitioned. In some places, as at St. Dunstan's, Canterbury, the authorized collectors wore badges, by which they could be recognized as such; at others, as at St. Peter's Cheap, London, the various brotherhoods were connected with some special chapel, or altar, or statue, and regularly collected for the particular end of their society. In some parishes these religious fraternities were more numerous than many at this

day would be inclined to suppose. At St. Dunstan's, Canterbury, just mentioned, there was first the brotherhood of the "Schaft," which seems to have been a general society embracing the whole parish, and which possessed property, such as malt, barley, wheat, cattle, and sheep. Besides this, there was the fraternity of St. Anne, which included women, and that of St. John; there were also small groups under their wardens; and of these we have the wardens of St. John's light, those of St. Anne's light, and those of St. Katherine. Mr. Cowper, the editor of these accounts, on this remarks: "These all go to show what life and activity there was in the little parish, which never wanted willing men to devote their time and influence to the management of their own affairs."

In times of common need, or when some great work of repair or of decoration was undertaken by the parish for their church, the various "fraternities" are found contributing out of their peculiar "stores" to the object. At Ashburton, for example, in 1486–87, a "silver foot" was made to the parish cross, and also the weather-cock got out of order and had to be seen to. To both of these objects there were contributions from "the stores of St. Nicholas," and "of St. George," etc. In fact, in this parish there were apparently about a dozen of these confraternities, namely: "the Stores of the B. V. Mary;" of "the Junior torches;" of St. George, St. Margaret, St. Clement; of "the Wyvyn store" of B. V. Mary; of St. Thomas of Canterbury; of St. James and of St. Giles. Some of these had as much as forty shillings at one time as a fund under their administration.

Some of the "fraternities" were merely spiritual associations, which helped to strengthen the bond of brotherhood

between parishes. One such existed in connection with the Cathedral of Lichfield, called the "Fraternity of the Brethren and Sisters of St. Chad." Enrolled as members are many bishops, abbots, priors, and other religious superiors, besides priests and all sorts and conditions of lay people. The priests were all pledged to say Masses for the welfare of the associates, living or dead. Thus, in each of the abbeys of Darley, Burton, and Shrewsbury, 100 Masses were said yearly for this end; at Trentham Priory 60 Masses; and at the Convent of Derby 300 psalters by the Benedictine Nuns were said for the associates. In the Cathedral church of Lichfield also four Masses were said daily, two for the living and two for the dead members; and in every associated parish 30 Masses were said during the year. In all these churches, every Sunday before the Holy Water, the "Our Father" was said by priest and people, "with hands raised," followed by a versicle and prayer to St. Chad. In the fifteenth century, when the bishop gave an indulgence to all those who were members of the fraternity, he states that this union of prayer already comprised 2434 Masses and 452 psalters yearly.

The organization of these societies was the same as that which has existed in similar associations up to the time of our modern trade unions. A meeting was held, at which officers were elected and accounts audited; fines for non-acceptance of office were frequently imposed, as well as for absence from the common meeting. Often members had to declare, on oath, that they would fulfil their voluntary obligations, and would keep secret the affairs of the society. Persons of ill repute were not admitted, and members who disgraced the fraternity were expelled. For example, the first guild

statutes printed by Mr. Toulmin Smith are those of Garlekhith, London. They begin—

"In worship of God Almighty our Creator and His Mother, Saint Mary, and all Saints and St. James the Apostle, a fraternity is begun by good men in the Church of St. James at Garlekhith in London, on the day of Saint James, the year of our Lord 1375, for the amendment of their lives and of their souls, and to nourish greater love between the brethren and sisters of the said brotherhood."

Each of them have sworn on the Book to perform the points underwritten—

"First, all those that are, or shall be, in the said brotherhood shall be of good life, condition, and behaviour, and shall love God and Holy Church and their neighbours, as Holy Church commands." Then, after various provisions as to meetings and payments to be made to the general fund, the statutes order that "if any of the aforesaid brethren fall into such distress that he hath nothing and cannot, on account of old age or sickness, help himself, if he has been in the brotherhood seven years, and during that time has performed all the duties, he shall have every week after from the common box fourteen pence (*i.e.* about £1 of our money) for the rest of his life, unless he recovers from his distress." In one form or other this provision for the assistance of needy members is repeated in the statutes of almost every guild. Some provide for help in case of distress coming "through any chance, through fire or water, thieves or sickness, or any other haps." Some, besides this kind of aid, add, "and if it so befall that he be young enough to work, and he fall into distress, so that he have nothing of his own to help himself

with, then the brethren shall help him, each with a portion as he pleases in the way of charity." Others furnish loans from the common fund to enable brethren to tide over temporary difficulties. "And if the case falleth that any of the brotherhood have need to borrow a certain sum of silver, he (can) go to the keepers of the box and take what he hath need of, so that the sum be not so large that one may not be helped as another, and that he leave a sufficient pledge, or else find a sufficient security among the brotherhood." Some, again, make the contributions to poor brethren a personal obligation on the members, such as a farthing a week from each of the brotherhood, unless the distress has been caused by folly or waste. Others extend their Christian charity to relieve distress beyond the circle of the brotherhood—that is, of any "whosoever falls into distress, poverty, lameness, blindness, sent by the grace of God to them, even if he be a thief proven, he shall have sevenpence a week from the brothers and sisters to assist him in his need." Some of the guilds in seaside districts provide for help in case of "loss through the sea," and there is little doubt that in mediæval days the great work carried on by such a body as the Royal Lifeboat Society would have been considered a work of religion, and the fitting object of a religious guild.

Dr. Jessop has described for us the functions of these religious brotherhoods—

"Besides all this there were small associations, called Gilds, the members of which were bound to devote a certain portion of their time and money and their energies to keep up the special commemoration and the special worship of some Saint's chapel or shrine, which was sometimes kept up in a corner of the church, and provided with an altar of its own, and served by a chaplain who was actually paid by

the subscriptions or free-will offerings of the members of the gild whose servant he was. Frequently there were half a dozen of these brotherhoods, who met on different days in the year; and frequently —indeed, one may say usually—there was a church house, a kind of parish club, in which the gilds held their meetings and transacted their business."

In the account of the "Building of Bodmin Church" in the fifteenth century we have an example of the working of this guild system. Every one appears to have given according to his means, and even generously. There were personal gifts, like that of an "hold woman," who gave 3*s.* 2½*d.*; and another woman, in addition to her subscription, sold her "crokk for 20*d.*" and gave the money to the Church. But the success of the enterprise evidently is to be attributed to the guilds which existed at that time in great numbers and in a most flourishing state in Bodmin. "Religious life," we are told, "permeated society, particularly in the fifteenth century." In Bodmin at that time almost every inhabitant seems to have been included in one or other of the many fraternities. Indeed, the spirit of association seems to have been so strong at this time that various groups of people joined themselves together for the purpose of making a common gift. In this way we read that "the young maidens of Fore Street and Bore Street" gave a common subscription in addition to the sums received from the Guild of Virgins in the same streets.

These interesting accounts also give the names of no fewer than forty guilds, all more or less connected with the parish church of Bodmin. Of these, five are trade guilds: the skinners and glovers under the patronage of St. Petroc; the

smiths under St. Dunstan and St. Eloy; the cordwainers under St. Anian; the millers under St. Martin; and the tailors and drapers under St. John the Baptist. All the rest of these fraternities "were," says the editor of these accounts, "established for social and religious objects, for the glory of God and the good of man." For the "wax gathering," money was received from (1) the Guild of St. David in "forestreet;" (2) St. Luke: (3) St. Michael; (4) Holy Trinity; (5) St. Leodgarius; (6) St. Clare; (7) St. Gregory, Pope; (8) St. Thomas; (9) B. V. Mary in the porch of the church; (10) Holy Trinity; (11) St. Katherine; (12) St. Anian; (13) St. Stephen; (14) St. Mary Magdalene; (15) St. James; (16) Holy Cross; (17) B. V. Mary in the chancel; (18) B. V. Mary in the chapel of St. Gregory; (19) St. Loy; (20) St. Petroc; (21) St. John; (22) St. Thomas "in Church hay;" (23) Corpus Christi.

One purpose of distinct utility to the parish, which was served by the guilds, was the provision of additional priests for the services of the church. In this they had the same object as the founders of chantries had in establishing them. Thus, to take an example, in the "Chantry Certificates" for Suffolk the purpose of the Guild of the Holy Ghost at Beccles is stated to have been to keep a priest "to celebrate in the church," to "pay the tithes, fifteenths and other taxes," and to contribute 40*s.* a year to the poor. A note appended says that "Beccles is a great and populous town" of "800 houseling" people, and "the said priest is aiding unto the curate there, who without help is not able to discharge the said cure. The said Guild is erected of devotion." So, too, to take another example, in the parish of Bingham, in

Nottinghamshire, there was "a guild of our Lady to maintain a priest;" and the Palmer's Guild of Ludlow, sometimes called the "Fraternity of St. John," which was maintained partly by endowments of land and partly through the donations of its members, maintained no fewer than ten priests out of its funds.

In reality there is hardly any good and useful purpose which can be imagined, religious or social, to which some mediæval guild or other was not devoted. Mr. Toulmin Smith, after examination of the documents relating to these fraternities, has enumerated the following as objects for which they were founded, or at any rate worked: (1) relief in poverty—a very general object; (2) sickness; (3) old age; (4) loss of sight; (5) loss of limb; (6) loss of cattle; (7) on fall of house; (8) in making pilgrimages; (9) loss by fire; (10) loss by flood; (11) loss by robbery; (12) shipwreck; (13) imprisonment; (14) aid in pecuniary difficulties; (15) aid to obtain work; (16) defending in law; (17) relief to deaf and dumb; (18) relief for leprosy; (19) dowry on marriage or on entry into religious house; (20) repairs of roads and bridges; (21) repairs of churches; (22) burial of the dead.

Mr. Thorold Rogers, in his *Economic Interpretation of History*, says of the Guilds that—

"they were well-nigh universal, though they were unchartered and informal. Their prosperity was derived from grants or charges on land or houses made for the purpose of securing the continuance of a religious office, much appreciated and exceeding common in the period of English social history which precedes the Reformation, prayers or Masses for the dead.

"The ancient tenements, which are still the property of the London companies, were originally burdened with Masses for donors. In the country the parochial clergy undertook the services of these chantries. . . . The establishment of a Mass or chantry priest at a fixed stipend, in a church with which he had no other relation, was a common form of endowment. The residue, if any, of the revenue derivable from these tenements was made the common property of the Guild, and as the continuity of the service was the great object of its establishment, the donor, like the modern trustee of a life income, took care that there should be a surplus from the foundation. The land or house was let, and the Guild consented to find the ministration which formed the motive of the grant."

This is very true, but it may be questioned whether Mr. Thorold Rogers appreciated the extent to which these chantry funds were intended to be devoted to purposes other than the performance of the specified religious services. Certainly writers generally have treated the question of the chantries as if they had no object but the keeping of obits or anniversary services for the original founder and his kin. To show what really was the case, it may be well to take a couple of instances in Hampshire. In connection with the parish church of Alton in the sixteenth century there were six obits or chantries. The following is the account of these which I take from the Chantry Certificates made by the King's Commissioners in the first year of the reign of Edward VI. :—

"(1) Issues of land for an obit for John Pigott; growing and coming out of certain houses and lands in Alton, for to maintain for ever a yearly obit there, in the tenure of Thomas Mathew of the yearly value of 23*s.* 4*d.* Whereof to the poor 15*s.* 4*d.*, to the priest and his clerk 8*s.*: (2) The same for an obit for William

Reding of the annual value of 15*s.*, of which the poor were to have 10*s.* and the priest and his clerk 5*s.*: (3) The same for Alice Hacker of the yearly value of 10*s.*, of which the poor were to get 7*s.* 8*d.* and the priest 2*s.* 4*d.*: (4) Another of the value of 4*s.*, the poor getting 2*s.* 10*d.* and the priest 1*s.* 2*d.*: (5) Another for the soul of Nicholas Bailey, worth annually 11*s.*, and of this 7*s.* 8d. was intended for the poor and 3*s.* 4*d.* for the clergy: (6) Another for Nicholas Crushelow worth 4*s.* 4*d.*, the poor getting 3*s.* 1*d.* and the priest 1*s.* 3*d.*"

That is to say, out of a total of 77*s.* 8*d.* the poor were to get 46*s.* 7*d.*, and only 31*s.* 1*d.* was devoted to the ecclesiastical services connected with the obits of Alton. Or, if we take the value of money in those days as being only twelve times that of our present money, out of a total of £36 12*s.* some £27 19*s.* went to support the poor.

As a further example of the way in which property was left to a guild as trustees, the case of the "Candlemas Guild" at Bury St. Edmund's may be cited. A few years after its foundation in 1471, one of its members left the guild considerable property for the common purposes of the fraternity, and for certain other specified objects. The name of the donor was John Smith, and his will was witnessed by the Abbot and Prior of Bury. It provided for the keep of an annual obit "devoutly," and for the residue of income to be kept till the appointment of every new abbot. On that event the sum thus accumulated was to be paid to the new abbot in lieu of the sum of money the town was bound to find at every election. Should there be any sum over the amount necessary for this purpose, it was to be expended in payment of the tenth or fifteenth, or other tax imposed on the citizens by royal authority. Year by year, at the annual meeting of the

guild, the wardens were bound to give an account of their administration of this trust. Year by year John Smith's will was read out at the meeting, and proclamation was made before the anniversary of his death in the following manner: "Let us all of charity pray for the soul of John. We put you in remembrance that you shall not miss the keeping of his dirge and also of his Mass." Round the town went the crier also with the lines—

"We put you in remembrance all that the oath have made,
To come to the Mass and the dirge the souls for to glade;
All the inhabitants of this towne are bound to do the same,
To pray for the souls of John and Anne, else they be to blame;
The which John afore-rehearsed to this town hath been full kind,
Three hundred marks for this town hath paid, no penny unpaid behind.
Now we have informed you of John Smith's will in writing as it is,
And for the great gifts that he hath given, God bring his soul to bliss.
Amen."

The example set by this donor to the Candlemas Guild at Bury was followed by many others in the latter part of the fifteenth century. For instance, "a gentlewoman," as she calls herself, Margaret Odom, after providing by will for the usual obit, and for a lamp to burn before "the holie sacrament in St. James' church," desires that the brethren of the guild shall devote the residue of the income arising from certain houses and lands she has conveyed to their keeping, to paying a priest to "say mass in the chapel of the gaol before the prisoners there, and giving them holy water and holy bread on all Sundays, and to give to the prisoners of the long ward of the said gaol every week seven faggots of wood from Hallowmas (November 1) to Easter day."

One function of the mediæval guilds must not be altogether passed by. This was their attendance at the great

processions, and notably at that of Corpus Christi. Some guilds, like the celebrated Corpus Christi Guild at York, with its thousands of members, were, of course, founded chiefly to do honour to the Blessed Sacrament. But, ordinarily, guilds of every kind were only too ready in those days to take part in the ecclesiastical pageants of the day. One example will suffice. It is the Order of the Corpus Christi procession at Winchester in 1435—

"At a convocation held at the city of Winchester the Friday next before the feast of Corpus Christi, in the 13th yere of the raigne of King Harry the sixt, after the Conquest—it was ordained by Richard Salter, mayor of the cytie of Winchester, John Symer and Harry Putt, Bailiffs of the cytie aforesaid, and also by all the cytizens and commonaltee of the same cytie: It is accorded of a certain general processyon in the feste of Corpus Christi of diverse artyficers and crafts within the same cytie being: that is to say: the Carpenters and Felters shall go together first; Smythes and Barbers, second; Cooks and Buchers, third; Shomakers with two lights, fourth; Tanners and Tapaners, fifth; Plummers and Silkmen, sixth; Fyshers and Farryers, seventh; Taveners, eighth; Wevyres with two lights, ninth; Fullars, with two lights, tenth; Dyers with two lights, eleventh; Chandlers and Brewers, twelfth; Mercers with two lights, thirteenth; Wyves with one light and John Blak with another, fourteenth; and all these lights shall be borne orderlie before the said procession before the prieste of the citie. And four lyghtes of the Brethren of St. John's shall be borne about the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, the same day in the procession aforesaid."

Lastly, it may be well to give an instance of some of the laws under which the mediæval guild system was governed. For this purpose the Statutes of the "Guild of the Purification of our Lady" at Bury St. Edmund's, which were revised and renewed in 1471, may be taken as a sample :—

1. All members were to swear obedience to the laws: were to pay 4*d.* on enrollment and 1*d.* to the light kept by the guild in the parish church: they must also get a surety to pay 10*s.* to the property of the fraternity on their death.

2. On becoming members all shall swear to fulfil the wills of John Smith and Margaret Odham, which were written in English at the beginning of the book, and which were to be read every year at the Guild dinner on February 2. After the dinner all members of the Guild shall kneel and say the *De profundis* and the "prayers that long therto" for the souls of the above founders.

3. All officers to be elected yearly.

4. All shall "have every year ther presens and speche daye at the charnell or in the churchyard in the day of the Epiphany for the ordynaunce and profit of the guylde. And yf any be absent of the sayde fraternytie but if he have a reasonable excuse he shall loose a pounde waxe."

5. All shall come to the Guild hall "anent after even-songe the daye of the Purification to the beadesbydding and there devoutly to praye for all the brethrene and systerne sowles that have been in guylde aforesaide." For absence a fine of a pound of wax.

6. On the death of any one member all shall attend at the "Exequye and Dirige."

7. The Alderman and Dye (*i.e.* sword-bearer) shall have £10 to give a dinner to the Guild out of the "crease." The £10 to be delivered to the next Alderman and Dye at election.

8. The Alderman and Dye to have for their trouble 3*s.* 4*d.*, and one pound and a half of wax for a torch. Also

the Alderman shall have 6 gallons of ale and the Dye 4 gallons, "and every eche of the four holders two gallons ale of the best of the guylde aforesaide."

9. On the death of any member, all shall contribute $\frac{1}{2}d.$ to be disposed of to the poor by the Alderman.

10. If a brother is sick whilst the Guild is "holden" he shall have meat and drink also as well as the one present at the dinner.

11. The number of the brethren were not to exceed 32, that they must be "of goode name and fame."

12. If any of the members "fall in stryfe together, . . . they shall not pursue to judicial courte," but notify it to the Alderman, who shall try to settle it and "bring them to accord." If he cannot, "then they may goo to common law."

13. If any brother "have anie need of our heres or lighte to any friend of his dead," he may have them for the "common profit of the guylde." If he take any other, he must pay a pound of wax.

14. Accounts to be passed every year by four auditors.

15. An unworthy member may be expelled by the "more part of the fraternity," and any property he holds must be returned.

16. The Guild shall maintain 5 tapers, one of 5 lbs. and four of "five quarters," burning in the Church of St. James; one shall burn each year at the sepulchre—"one year in the church of our Lady, and another year in the church of St. James."

17. The fraternity shall sing a Mass on the Purification at one of the churches, at which each shall offer $\frac{1}{4}d.$ for dead members.

18. The Alderman shall find a part of the high days in the Guild hall, that is, "all manner naperie to the sayde deyce or table longing; and also all manner stuffe to the firste messe except bread and ale. And the Dye, the charges in the kechen and the holders all the necessaries longing to the buttery, pantry and to the said tables in the guylde hall except bread and ale."

19. All who hold any "Guylde Cattle" shall come to the Hall on the Sunday after the Assumption, and the Alderman, Dye and auditors shall have the roll of stock and the increase entered.

20. The Alderman and Dye "shall receive of two houses in Wellis street of the gift of Jeffery Glemes for the 2*s.* yerely, keeping the reparation of four alms-houses joining to them."

21. Upon any alienation of the lands, etc., that John Smith gave to the town of Bury, the same shall be done with those which Margaret Odham gave to the Candlemas Guild, also those belonging to St. Mary's aulter, to St. Thomas' aulter and to the almshouses.

22. According to John Smith's will, four of the feofees of the property to be chosen at Candlemas are to give account to the other feofees. They shall provide for the Dirge on St. Peter's even at Midsummer and the Mass next day for J. S. and his wife Anne.

23. Those who have keys of the hutch or of the porch door of Guild are to bring them in at Candlemas, and they are to be given to those "who are considered best to keep them."

In the foregoing chapters I have endeavoured to gather together from the scattered and frequently minute material which exists some illustrations of parochial life in mediæval times. The result must speak for itself; it is, I feel sure, as far as it goes, correct as to the outline of the picture. Had I not been anxious not to weary the reader by the very multiplicity and minuteness of the details, the result might have been perhaps more definite, and the lights and shades been more effective. As it is, however, my purpose has been accomplished if I have succeeded in interesting them in this description of the life led by our ancestors in a mediæval parish—a life so strangely and entirely different to that which now exists in the towns and villages of modern England. For "in the Middle Ages," says a writer in a late number of *The National Review*, in a passage already referred to, "the conscious sharing in a world-wide tradition bound the local to the universal life, and through art and ritual the minds of the poor were familiarized with facts of the Christian faith. By our own poor I fear these facts are very dimly realized."

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PRINTED BY
WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.

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Gasquet, Francis Aidan,
1846-1929.
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